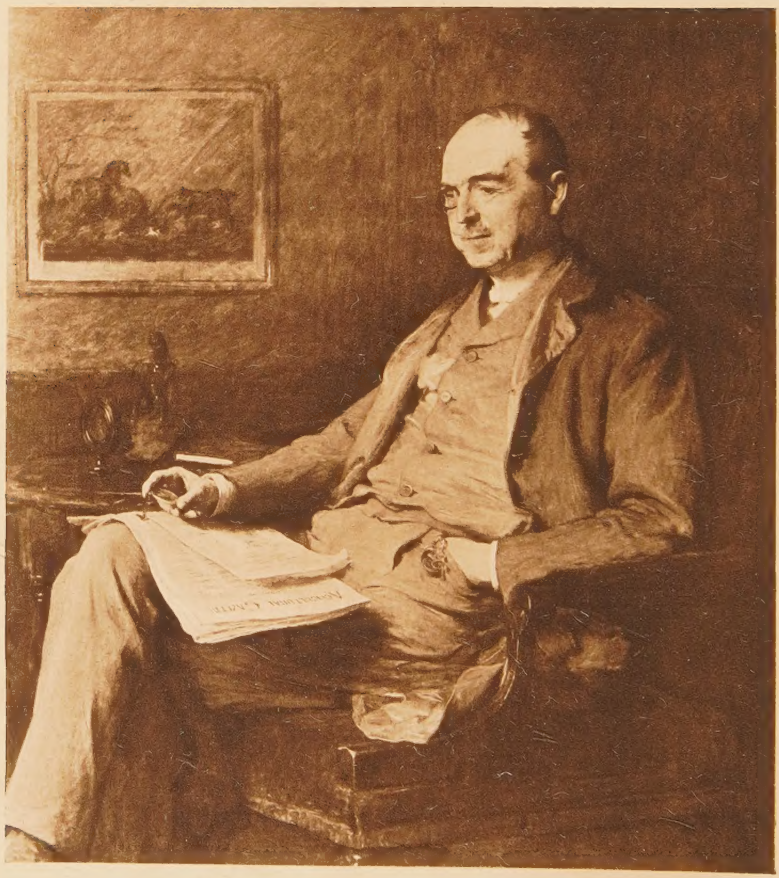
HALF-A-CENTURY OF SUCCESSFUL TRADE

BY

SIR HERBERT MAXWELL

25.00

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SUCCESSFUL TRADE



SIR WALTER GILBEY BARONET.

From the painting by W. Q. Orchardson, R.A.

Presented to Sir Walter Gilbey in recognition of his services in the Revival of the National Industry of Horse Breeding, on behalf of over twelve Hundred subscribers by H.M. King Edward VII. when Prince of Wales. March 3rd. 1891.

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SUCCESSFUL TRADE

Being a Sketch of the Rise and Development of the Business of

W & A GILBEY,

1857–1907

BY

The Right Hon. SIR HERBERT MAXWELL, Bart.

Printed for private circulation by W & A GILBEY, LTD., at the PANTHEON PRESS, LONDON.

1907.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/halfcenturyofsuc0000herb

CONTENTS

		PAGE
INTRODUCTION	.. ..	1
CHAPTER I.	Foundation and Rise of the Firm ..	3
,, II.	Business Principles	24
,, III.	Château Loudenne	40
,, IV.	The Distilleries, Bonded Stores and Export Department	59
,, V.	The Pantheon	69
APPENDIX	.. ..	79
INDEX	.. ..	81

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	To face page
Sir Walter Gilbey	*Frontispiece*
Alfred Gilbey	1
The Bishop Stortford and London Coach	3
Henry Gilbey, Coach Proprietor	4
Christopher Smith, M.P., Lord Mayor of London ..	6
Henry Parry Gilbey	8
Henry Arthur Blyth	10
Henry Gold	11
Great Titchfield Street Stores	12
Gilbey's Daily L.&N.W.R. Train to the Docks ..	16
Jarnac, Cognac—View on the Charente	19
Vineyard Slopes on the River Douro	24
View of Oporto	20
,, Bordeaux	26
,, Mayence	28
,, Reims	30
,, Saumur	33
,, Beaune	34
,, Jerez de la Frontera	36
,, Tarragona	38
Chateau Loudenne—A View of the Vineyards ..	14
,, ,, Archway Entrance	40
,, ,, A View from the River Gironde	43
,, ,, Ploughing between the Rows of Vines	45
,, ,, Unloading Claret	47
,, ,, The Avenue and Chateau ..	49
,, ,, Gathering Grapes	51
,, ,, Carting Grapes	53
,, ,, A Bin of Claret	54
,, ,, Bottling the Wines of Château Loudenne	57
,, ,, A Group of Vinedressers and Labourers	79
,, ,, Bronze Statuette presented to W & A Gilbey by the Agricultural Society of the Gironde	80
,, ,, Gold Medal of French Government	81
Glen-Spey Distillery	58
A Bonded Store at Glen-Spey	59
Strathmill Distillery	61
Gin Distillery	63
Bottle Warehouse on the Regent's Canal	65
Despatching Floor, Camden Town	66
Llamas transporting Cases in the Bolivian Andes ..	67
The Pantheon—Interior, A.D. 1907	23
,, ,, ,, A.D. 1835	69
,, ,, Exterior, A.D. 1829	71
,, ,, Interior, A.D. 1772	72
,, ,, Mr. Lunardi's Balloon, A.D. 1784 ..	74
,, ,, Apparatus & Great Cylinder, A.D. 1814	76

ALFRED GILBEY—*Born 1833; died 1879*

HALF-A-CENTURY OF SUCCESSFUL TRADE

Few themes are more threadbare than the progress of commerce and the rapid realisation of wealth during the nineteenth century. It may well seem superfluous to add another to the numerous memoirs already published describing the genesis and growth of great productive undertakings consequent upon the impetus given to ancient industries by the application of steam, electricity and improved machinery, or the creation of new ones resulting from the discovery of these mighty adjuncts to human effort. But the commercial enterprise whereof it is proposed to give an outline in the following pages differs from most others on a similar scale inasmuch as, while it deals with the production and disposal of an article which has been an object of human industry from ages anterior to written record, it owes its remarkable success in no degree to any modern

invention, further than so far as every business has derived benefit from increased facilities of communication and locomotion. The position attained by the firm of W & A Gilbey, the scale of its operations, the manner in which prejudice has been overcome and competition successfully encountered have resulted from the application of unvarying principles which it is the purpose of this brief narrative to explain.

THE BISHOP STORTFORD AND LONDON COACH, A.D. 1824.

CHAPTER I.

Foundation and Rise of the Firm.

The business which has its headquarters in the spacious premises of the Pantheon took its rise from the ashes of a very different industry. No system ever was more ruthlessly and swiftly overthrown by a stronger competitor than that of the road coaches by the railways. Ruin overtook it at a time when it had recently been brought to its highest development. The genius of McAdam* had transformed the surface of our highways from a labyrinth of ruts to hard and uniform smoothness, fitting them for the utmost speed that could be got out of well-built coaches with relays of well-bred teams. The English mail service had been brought to the utmost limit of swiftness and punctuality consistent with the powers

The Rail ruins the Road

* It is not generally remembered that John Loudon McAdam, "the Colossus of Roads," was descended from a refugee of the clan Macgregor—"the clan that is nameless by day." The whole clan having been outlawed, and the very name of Macgregor proscribed on pain of death, the fugitive settled in Ayrshire and took the name of McAdam, for, said he, no law could prevent him proclaiming himself a son of Adam.

of horse-flesh—it had no rival in the world. On the Great North Road stood four hundred coach horses, one for every mile of the journey between Edinburgh and London; the mail coaches travelled at ten miles an hour, including stoppages, and people along the route might set their watches accurately by the passing of the coach.

Henry Gilbey, 1789–1839.

Among those who took most pride in the smart and workmanlike service of the road was Henry Gilbey, of Bishop's Stortford, proprietor of the coach running between that town and London, a distance of 30 miles, the double journey being accomplished daily. This, being a section of the direct route to Cambridge and also to Newmarket, brought Mr. Gilbey into frequent contact with a large number and variety of passengers, with whom his jovial manner and fund of anecdote made him a prime favourite. He often took the ribbons himself, and had the honour, not infrequently, of driving the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.) and his brothers. On one occasion the Prince Regent, whose open-handed disposition went far to atone for some of his shortcomings, presented Mr. Gilbey with one of his own horses.

Henry Gilbey was born in 1789, the very year in which was uttered an ominous prophecy

HENRY GILBEY, Coach Proprietor—*Born 1790; died 1842.*

whereof he was destined to see the literal fulfilment. It was in that year, long before people could imagine any swifter means of locomotion than by horses on land and sails at sea, that Erasmus Darwin published his *Loves of the Plants*, containing these remarkable lines :—

> "Soon shall thine arm, resistless Steam, afar
> Drag the slow barge and drive the rapid car."

Amid the bitter execration of all but the farsighted, the railway locomotive invaded one route after another ; one by one the well-appointed coaches with their spanking teams disappeared ; valley and hill, woodland and moor, echoed to the steam whistle instead of the merry flourish of the "yard of tin."

Mr. Gilbey at first carried a bold front, refusing to perceive anything serious in the competition of railways, and encouraging his fellows in the coaching business not to apprehend any injury from a rival "which won't even stop to pick up passengers!"

Nevertheless, to Henry Gilbey and to many another good man, this revolution meant loss of capital and occupation. He had already given a round dozen of hostages to fortune in the shape of six sons and as many daughters, to whom he appears to have been able to leave little except a good name and that energy of

character and power of application which are so often conspicuous in the members of a large family—so often deficient in a solitary son born, as the saying goes, with a silver spoon in his mouth. He died in 1839.

Henry Parry Gilbey, 1824–1892

His eldest surviving son, Henry Parry Gilbey, having been born in 1824, was educated at Christ's Hospital, to which he was presented by his relative, Mr. Christopher Smith, M.P., a wine merchant, Lord Mayor of London in 1817.* Mr. Smith's partner was Mr. James Church Bailey, uncle to young Henry, who, when he left school, was taken into the office of Smith, Bailey & Co., thus forging the first link in the long chain connecting the Gilbey family with the wine trade.

In 1842 the partnership of Smith, Bailey & Co. was dissolved, and new businesses were formed under the names of Smith & Co. and James Church Bailey & Co. Henry Parry Gilbey went into the office of his uncle, Mr. Bailey, and remained with him for some years, until, in 1851, he joined Mr. Southard in establishing the firm of Southard, Gilbey & Co. as wholesale wine merchants in the City of London.

* Mr. Christopher Smith's business was founded in 1784, and continues to the present time under the name of Smith, Woodhouse & Co., one of the oldest and most highly respected firms in the wine trade.

CHRISTOPHER SMITH, M.P., Lord Mayor of London, 1817.
Born 1740; died 1835.

Henry Parry Gilbey's younger brothers, Walter and Alfred, had their own way to make in the world, and started in life as clerks, Walter finding employment with a firm of Parliamentary Agents, and Alfred as an assistant in the wine business of his eldest brother, Henry Parry Gilbey. When the Crimean War broke out, in 1854, they both volunteered for service with the army as civilians, their cousin, Henry Grinling, doing likewise. All three young men obtained employment—the Gilbeys as clerks in the Army Pay Department, and Grinling as secretary to Dr. E. A. Parkes, Head of the British civil hospitals in the East.* They were sent out to the seat of war, but not to the front. Upon the Pay Department, as it was constituted in those days, were thrown functions which should have been discharged by the Medical Staff, had there been one properly organised. For nearly two years the brothers Gilbey were employed on clerical work in a wooden structure which served for a convalescent hospital near Gallipoli. When peace was declared, their occupation and emolument ceased simultaneously, and they returned to London to make a fresh start.

Walter Gilbey, b. 1831; *now Sir Walter Gilbey, of Elsenham Hall, Baronet*

Alfred Gilbey, 1833–1879

Walter by this time was six-and-twenty,

* Afterwards Head of Netley Hospital.

Alfred two years younger ; for neither of them was the prospect very promising. They took counsel with their elder brother Henry, whose business was a wholesale one. Acting on his advice and with his financial assistance, they took cellars at the corner of Berwick Street and Oxford Street and started business in a small way as retail merchants under the name of W & A Gilbey.

Foundation of the firm of W & A Gilbey, 1857

This was in February 1857. Possessing not half-a-crown of capital between them, for their brother had advanced the funds necessary for their little enterprise, their most sanguine anticipation cannot have suggested what actually came to pass—namely, that they should see their business extended to the remotest ends of the earth, with an invested capital of millions sterling.

Henry Parry Gilbey's experience was the guiding star of the young firm. Day after day he used to walk round from his house in Brunswick Square, on his way to and from the City, for the purpose of conferring with and advising his brothers. Although he did not actually retire from the firm of Southard, Gilbey & Co. till July, 1865, he insisted upon regarding his loan to his brothers as an investment, and took his modest share in the first division of

HENRY PARRY GILBEY—*Born 1824; died 1892.*

profits after the commencement of business, as undoubtedly he would have participated with them had the balance been on the wrong side.

At that time the consumption of European wines in Great Britain was confined almost entirely to the wealthy, or at least the well-to-do. The duty of 12*s.* per dozen on French wines sufficed to place them far beyond the reach of the mass of consumers. But whereas the excise of those days favoured Colonial wines to the extent of 5*s.* 6*d.* per dozen, the consumption of these wines was increasing steadily, and Henry Gilbey advised his brothers to direct their attention to that branch of the trade. The enterprise prospered signally, and in a short time the firm had about 20,000 customers on their books, many of them, no doubt, for very trifling amounts, but evidence, in the aggregate, of the energy and success with which the brothers had pushed their business.

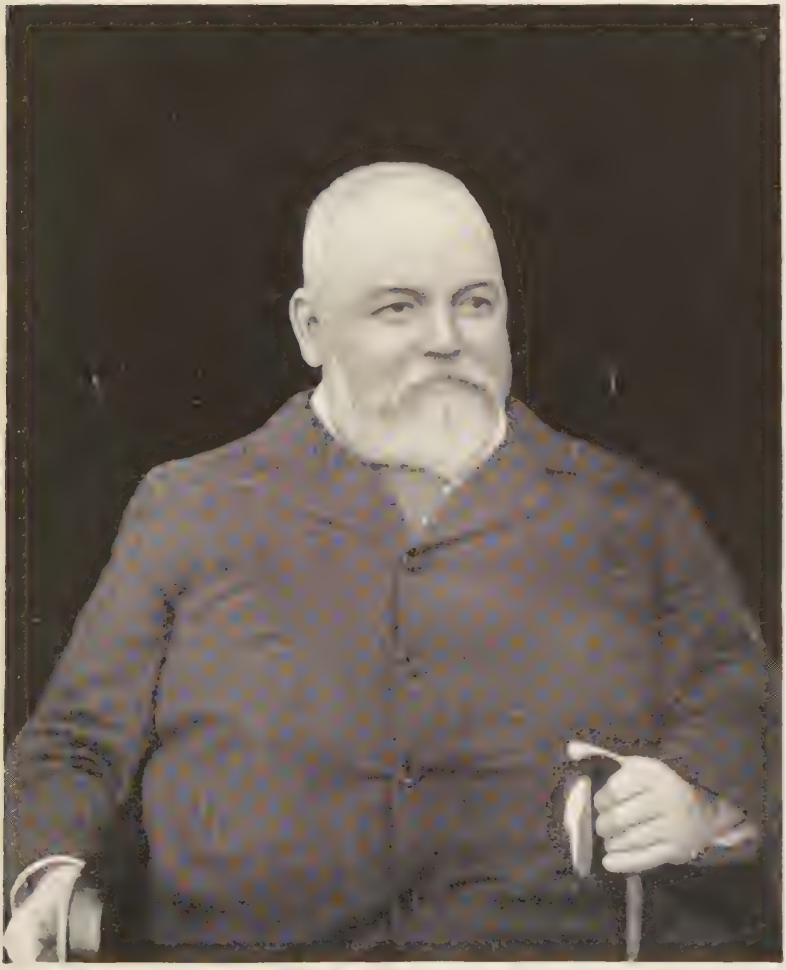
It seemed to them that operations which had made such a good start in London might be extended with advantage to other centres of population ; but before making a move in that direction, Messrs. Gilbey invited the co-operation of some among their friends. In doing so they followed a clannish impulse which, from first to last, has been a distinguishing feature in

the history of the firm. Their eldest sister had married James Blyth, of Chelmsford, whose younger son, Henry Arthur, had been brought into the office two months after the commencement of business, at the early age of fourteen, fresh from school. The lad's strong point proved to be figures, and eventually he was given charge of the finance department. This appointment had no light bearing upon the subsequent history of the firm, so greatly did young Blyth's regularity and promptness in settling accounts tend to establish its credit. And good credit in business means saving in cost, for the seller who feels certain of receiving cash down finds it to his own interest to make considerable reductions in prices.

Henry Arthur Blyth, 1843–1901

Of the talents which James Blyth, Henry's elder brother, brought to the service of the firm, I am restrained from saying much, for the same propitious reason which imposes silence regarding the merits of other directors—namely, that they are still living. He was already employed in 1855 in the wine trade, and in 1856 was with another firm doing a large trade in South African wines, but transferred his services to W & A Gilbey in May, 1858, and was admitted as a partner

James Blyth, b. 1841; *now Sir James Blyth, of Blythwood, Baronet*



HENRY ARTHUR BLYTH – *Born 1843 : died 1901.*

HENRY GOLD—*Born 1835; died 1900.*

at the same time as his brother in October, 1863.

Henry Gold, 1835–1900
Charles Gold, b. 1837; *now Sir Charles Gold*

It so happened that the two younger sisters of the Gilbeys were engaged to be married to Henry and Charles Gold, who entered the office in 1857 and 1858 respectively, and who also became partners in the business.

Henry Grinling b. 1834

In 1865 Henry Grinling resigned an appointment at the War Office, entered the office of Gilbeys and became a partner in the following year.

The Second Generation

The administrative strength of the business increased *pari passu* with its growth by the admission of sons of the existing partners as they respectively arrived at years of discretion and usefulness, all of whom are active workers and who find plenty of scope for their several abilities. They are: —

	Admitted Partner in	
Alfred Gilbey ...	1880	Sons of the late Alfred Gilbey
William Crosbie Gilbey	1883	
Newman Gilbey ...	1885	
Henry Walter Gilbey	1883	Sons of Sir Walter Gilbey
Arthur Nockolds Gilbey	1890	
Alfred Gilbey Gold	1883	Son of the late Henry Gold
Gibbons Grinling ..	1893	Son of Henry Grinling
Herbert William Blyth	1893	Son of Sir James Blyth
Arthur William Blyth	1893	Son of the late Henry Blyth

This by way of anticipation. To revert to the establishment in Berwick Street, the rapid growth of the business exceeded the capacity of those modest premises before the end of the second year, and in 1859 an office was opened at No. 357 Oxford Street, with cellars under the Princess's Theatre. In 1860 again, therefore, new and larger premises were acquired in Great Titchfield Street, extending backwards into buildings in Wells Street, where cellars above ground were erected and still exist, though in an altered form. When these were finished, the administrative part of the business was rearranged, Walter Gilbey undertaking the office work and Alfred controlling the cellars and workpeople. The partners had to feel their own way in matters of organisation, for, although greatly helped by the business experience of their elder brother Henry, they had struck out a new line for themselves, and there was no firm then in the wine trade to whom they could look for guidance — none that had adopted the commercial principle of searching the world for wholesome and cheap wines and selling them at a small rate of profit. In this particular line the Gilbeys were pioneers, marking out a route which has since been followed by others in the trade.

New premises acquired in Great Titchfield Street, 1860

Orders from Ireland had flowed in freely,

From the *Illustrated London News*, of November 23rd, 1861.

THE STORES, GREAT TITCHFIELD STREET, LONDON.

and already, in 1858 (before the move into larger London premises), a branch establishment had been opened in Dublin under direction of Henry Gold, with whom was James Blyth; and eight months later, in 1859, James Blyth went with Charles Gold to open a branch in Edinburgh.

Irish branch established in 1858, Scottish in 1859

By this time the trade in South African wines (which Messrs. Gilbey were the first to sell under the name of Cape wines) had assumed such dimensions that it was felt desirable to have somebody on the spot to superintend the shipping. Accordingly James Blyth received instructions to proceed to Cape Town and undertake that duty. But he never left London on that voyage, for at that very time a fiscal revolution was effected by the Cobden treaty with France which threatened to be as fatal to the business of the Gilbeys as the railway movement had been to that of their father. Colonial preference was swept away by Mr. Gladstone's Budget of 1860, which reduced the duty on French Wines from twelve shillings to two shillings per dozen. It was a death-blow to the popularity of Cape wines, for it opened British markets to the light wines of Bordeaux, which had hitherto been partially excluded by the duty.

Commercial Treaty with France, 1860

It was a trying time for the Gilbeys, who at first could discern nothing but ruin in the destruction of the trade on which their business had been almost exclusively built up. The only expedient open to them was a hazardous one, but, with a true instinct, they determined to adopt it. Wine merchants in general had no faith in "Gladstone claret." French wines hitherto had been a luxury for the rich, and hardly anybody in the trade shared the Chancellor of the Excheqeur's expectation that the cheaper wines of the Médoc would ever impair the supremacy of John Barleycorn in England.

Seeing that no attempt was made by old-established firms to reduce the price of claret and burgundy to the full extent of the reduction in duty, the upstart house of Gilbeys, scarcely four years old, led the way by announcing that they were prepared to allow their customers the full benefit accruing from the lowering of the duty by 70 per cent. For the first time wine was to be treated as a commercial article, offered to customers at a price exactly in proportion to the cost of production.

Never was there fuller illustration of the "tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Had these young men hesitated—had they attempted, as they might have done with some success if their firm had been of older standing and loftier prestige,

CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE—A VIEW OF SOME OF THE VINEYARDS AND BUILDINGS

to intercept the whole profit arising from the reduced duty—their business would never have been heard of again. As it was, the bold line which they took secured for them a lead which has never been lost. The rope which at first seemed about to drag the firm to inevitable dissolution has proved in effect the mainstay of its fortunes.

"Off" Licences 1860

The reduction of duty on French wines was not the only feature in Mr. Gladstone's memorable budget of 1860 which the Gilbeys had the acumen to turn to good account. Previous to that date the retailing of wines and spirits was restricted by law to hotel-keepers, publicans and wine merchants; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the only one since the days of Pitt who has succeeded in imparting an oratorical grace to his financial statements—perceived an opportunity for combining philanthropy with profit to the revenue. Those persons, he argued, who bought wine or spirits by the bottle from a grocer or "off" licence holder for consumption at home would suffer less temptation to excess than if they were compelled to frequent public-houses for their liquor. That the latter expectation has been realised may be assumed from the fact that, although the "off" system has been vigorously attacked from time to time by such mutually opposing parties as the "on"

retailers and the teetotallers, it has stood the test of examination, first by the House of Lords Committee in 1879, and second by the Royal Commission on the Licensing Laws which sat in 1896-7-8.

The new legislation was turned promptly to account by Messrs. Gilbey. Hitherto they had dealt directly with customers from their houses in London, Dublin and Edinburgh, but the institution of "off" licences opened a new field for enterprise. Overtures were received from grocers here and there in provincial towns, offering to act as agents for the sale of Gilbey's wines and spirits.

Once more the business instinct of the partners directed them aright. An arrangement was come to upon terms mutually advantageous to principal and agent. The firm, conducting its sales through local agencies, was relieved from the expense of canvassers and travellers, securing at the same time provincial depôts for the exclusive distribution of its own liquors. The agent acquired a monopoly in his allotted district for the wines and spirits which had already established a reputation for excellence and moderate price, and found himself well remunerated by a percentage upon sales. Reading, Torquay and Wolverhampton were the first towns in which agents

Beginning of the agency system, 1861

Daily L.N.W.R. Train leaving W. & A. GILBEY'S Export Warehouse with Goods for the Docks.

were appointed, but from all parts applications for appointment began pouring in, far more in number than could be granted. In a few years the great majority of customers drew their supplies through local agencies instead of from the Oxford Street headquarters.

It must not be supposed that by the mere establishment of agencies in the provinces an immediate saving in expense was effected. The percentage allowed on the sale of wines, many of which were offered to customers at from 1*s.* to 3*s.* a bottle, left very little margin of profit upon goods obtained through wholesale dealers or Continental agents. In this, as in most other trading concerns, the steadiest profit is assured to the middleman, and for that reason the partners determined to become themselves the sole middlemen between the producer and the consumer. Just as the eldest brother, Henry Parry Gilbey, had enabled the younger ones to lay the foundation of the house upon capital advanced by him, so now he brought to their aid the experience and connection of a wholesale merchant. Although from the first he had been a partner with his brothers (though with a smaller share than either of them), it was not until 1866 that he retired from his wholesale business in the city and threw in his lot for good and all with the younger firm.

In 1863 Alfred Gilbey and James Blyth made their first tour through the wine districts of France, purchasing wines and establishing those direct relations with the growers which have continued to the present day. Alfred kept a full record of all transactions and of the travellers' impressions; but whereas a hard day's work does not conduce to literary facility in the evening, he made it a practice to rise at four in the morning to write up the journal. Strong points, undoubtedly, Alfred had, but fluency in foreign languages was not among them; and James Blyth tells how, sleeping as they generally did in adjacent rooms with an open door between, he was frequently roused by interrogatories upon foreign idioms and orthography.

Direct relations established with Wine Growers, 1863

A yearly series of visits was thus commenced, in the course of which every wine-producing country in Western and Central Europe was visited, including the cork-growing districts. The result of these peregrinations was to bring a large British retail business for the first time into direct relations with the growers, without the intervention of Continental agents and the addition of their profits to the cost of production.

In some countries it was found that the produce of the more remote vineyards passed through several hands before being shipped to

JARNAC (Cognac District). View on the River Charente, where W & A GILBEY'S Brandy Stores are situated.

England. The Gilbeys' object was to purchase from the actual producer in each country, and arrangements were made accordingly.

Moreover, it was found possible to obtain conditions greatly reducing the cost of transport by land and sea—a most important consideration affecting transactions with low-priced wines. By these means the commission paid to permanent provincial agents in the United Kingdom and elsewhere was far more than balanced by the saving effected on the Continent.

Of equal, if not greater, importance was the power received of obtaining at first hand any quality or variety of wine that might be in demand. Thus, in every wine-growing country, the Gilbeys, either through their own local establishments or from their relations with the most representative men in each district, were enabled to make selections from the choicest stocks and on the most favourable conditions.

In further illustration of the ascendancy thus secured in Continental markets, it may be mentioned, by anticipation, that, in 1879 and 1881, when the ravages of *phylloxera* among the vines of Cognac threatened to bring the production of the famous wine-brandy of that district permanently to an end, and did, in fact, arrest it entirely for many years, Messrs. Gilbey

secured from the stocks of the principal growers brandies to the value of nearly a million sterling.*

Another transaction of similar magnitude was recorded as follows in the *Times* for 9th May, 1903 :—

"LARGE SALE OF OLD PORT. — Our Oporto correspondent telegraphs :—'A sensational transaction has just taken place whereby over 2,000 pipes of old port changed hands, the purchasers being Messrs. W & A GILBEY. I believe that this is a record sale and comprises many old vintages.'"

A pipe of port contains 115 gallons, equal to 57½ dozen quart bottles. By this single transaction, therefore, no less than 115,000 dozens of port were brought into the cellars of the firm.

Direct dealing with Cork Manufacturers

The advantage accruing from direct relations with the wine-growers proved so considerable that it was not long before Messrs. Gilbey entered upon a similar arrangement with the producers of another material indispensable in the wine trade—namely, cork.

When the enormous and ever-increasing

*It is scarcely necessary to note that "brandy" is a term unknown in France, where this spirit is called *eau-de-vie*, the exact equivalent of the Gaelic *uisge-béátha*, whence our "whisky." Brandy, formerly called "brand-wine" (see Beaumont and Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush*, iii., 1) and "brandy-wine," is from the Dutch *brandewijn*—literally burnt or distilled wine.

View of OPORTO on the River Douro where W & A GILBEY'S Ports are stored until required for shipment to London

consumption of cork is taken into account—when it is considered that modern science has discovered no effective substitute for it, that cork fit for bottling purposes can only be had from trees between thirty and forty years old, the earlier strippings being only fit for tanning, for net-floats, etc., and that the crop can only be taken at intervals of eight or ten years—it is difficult to comprehend how the incessant demand is supplied. The following extracts, therefore, may be found of interest, taken from the report of James Blyth and Charles Gold upon one of the periodical visits to the Continent in January and February, 1876. Having arrived at Palafurgell, in the Spanish province of Gerona, on the evening of 24th January—

". . . We find that the whole of the Province of Gerona is devoted to the growth of the cork wood, the mountains being covered with the trees in all directions, which we observed on our journey here. It appears a very easy way for men to invest their capital, and peculiarly suited to the Spanish temperament, for very little supervision or outlay is necessary. As an instance, we heard of one proprietor of a cork forest who sold annually £3,000 worth of cork wood, and his only expense was £60 a year for 'stripping.' It is customary to strip a tree every seven or ten years, according to the pocket of the proprietor, but of course there are trees of every stage, so that it is an annual process which takes place in all the forests. An experienced

eye can detect when a tree was last relieved of its bark. When you hear of the enormous quantities of corks annually exported, it would naturally seem that with its slow growth the stock would soon be exhausted; but we are told that only one-third of the cork forests of Spain are worked at all, the bulk of this kind of property being in the hands of noblemen of Spain.

". . . Palamos is the shipping port for this country, about one hour's drive by a good road from Palafurgell; and from here the corks for France and England are exported by steamer to Marseilles. From this seaport of Palamos, and also from several other towns, such as St. Feliere and Arrons-de-Mar, the entire population is engaged in the cork trade; in fact, cork appears here to be turned to almost every purpose. We noticed, besides, cork stoppers, cork mats, cork hearth-stones, cork sticks, cork pictures, cork ornaments and trinkets, cork legs, etc."

The town of Palafurgell contained many cork manufactories, and it became important to endeavour

"to fathom the complications appertaining to the various qualities and sizes; as it would appear that although there are endless varieties and shapes that cork is cut into, such as pint corks, Imperial measure corks, ginger-beer corks, bungs, etc., etc., yet the first quality cork wood can all be cut into quart wine corks; although these again would consist of several sizes and vary in quality, although cut from the same wood."

INTERIOR OF THE PANTHEON, LONDON HEAD OFFICE OF W & A GILBEY A D. 1907

This divergence has drawn us far ahead of the affairs of the firm in its early days, to which a return must now be made.

The Pantheon acquired 1867

Despite the measure of decentralisation effected by the appointment of provincial agents, the transactions of the firm continued to increase at such a rate as to outgrow the accommodation provided in 1860. Premises on a heroic scale were required, and it testifies to the confidence felt by the partners in the future of their house, that when they were informed privately that the great edifice known as the Pantheon was in the market, they did not hesitate to secure a lease for twenty-eight years. The ownership, as to parts, having become vested in several persons during the previous fifty years, it was some years before the entire freehold was acquired by Messrs. Gilbey.

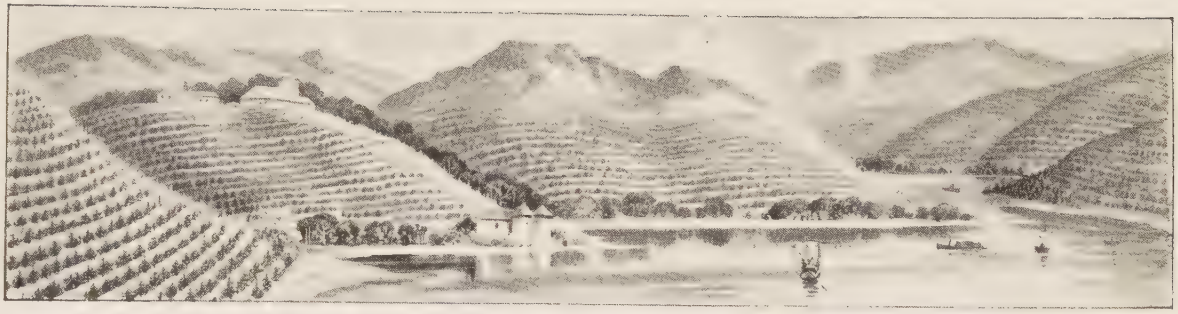
How fully this bold stroke has been justified there is the subsequent history of the business to prove. Meanwhile it may be profitable to examine the principles by which the firm had been guided to such signal success, and which are followed to this day.

CHAPTER II.

Business Principles

It has been shown that the early success and rapid expansion of the firm of Gilbeys was owing to the promptitude shown by the original partners in occupying the new avenues opened by the French treaty and the legislation of 1860 consequent thereon.

A good start is an excellent thing in a race, but there is many a fine horse which cuts out the work over part of the course, yet cannot stay the distance, and is found in the ruck at the finish. Applying this metaphor to the career of the Gilbeys, it may be said that they got away quickly, forced the running during the whole journey, and—well, I am not in the judge's box, neither is the race yet over, but backers need feel no nervousness about the finish. Put in plain terms, it means this, that no business could show a record of half-a-century, such as is housed in the Pantheon, without exciting legitimate curiosity as to the method by which such fine results have been attained.



VINEYARD SLOPES ON THE RIVER DOURO, PORTUGAL.

The main principles, then, which have been observed from the beginning are as follows:—

(1) Payment by results.

(2) Continuous personal direction.

(3) Stock-taking and balancing at short intervals.

(4) Allowing customers full benefit from favourable markets.

(5) Refusal to pay secret commissions upon orders.

Payment by Results

(1) From the earliest days of the firm, it has been the rule to remunerate the administrative establishment in proportion to the profits of each year. In the early years of the business—those good times when Englishmen were "drinking themselves free from the Alabama claims"—there was not, in the administrative part of the concern, a single *employé* who received any large fixed remuneration; but, under the system of profit-sharing established from the first, the incomes of many persons concerned in the transactions have risen considerably, according to the nature of their duties.

Taking human nature as it is, and not as one might wish to believe it to be, the

utmost cannot be got out of any body of men who feel that their circumstances are unaffected by the greater or less results of their labours. "Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny a day?" Yes; but there might have been no murmuring against the good man of the house had he found it possible to remunerate the labourers in his vineyard according to his profits on the vintage. This would be impossible, of course, in the case of casual labourers, whom the employer in the parable "went out early in the morning to hire;" but, applied to the thinking department of a commercial undertaking, it proves a marvellous sharpener of the wits. Here and there one may find an altruist character insensible to the spur of private advantage, content to yield the utmost of which he is capable without thought of reward; but such natures are very rare. From the vast majority of men the utmost efficiency of administration and vigilance of attention can only be secured by the prospect of sharing in the result. Who, for instance, can suppose that, when Gilbeys first adopted the system of provincial agencies, that the sale of their goods would have mounted as rapidly had their agents been working on fixed salaries, as it did when pushed by men whose profit depended upon the amount of their sales?

VIEW OF BORDEAUX, ON THE RIVER GIRONDE, THE CHIEF TOWN IN THE CLARET DISTRICT.

(2) So it has proved in the general administration of this business. The partners were not content to invest their capital and leave the administration to subordinates working on fixed salaries. From the first they devoted continuous personal attention and effort to the regulation of details and the development of their trade, and all their faculties were stimulated, their acumen quickened, by the knowledge that the amount of return for their labours depended upon instant advantage being taken of every opening that presented itself, of every change in legislation and the taste of the public.

Continuous personal direction

The practice instituted by the founders of the house has been maintained since it became, in 1893, a private company under the Limited Liability Act. The first Board of Directors consisted of sixteen men, all related by blood or marriage with the original founders. Gilbeys and Blyths, Golds and Grinlings, directors—not merely in name, registering periodically the transactions of a general manager, but directors in act and fact, relieving each other in batches in daily attendance at the Pantheon, as cognisant of the minutest transaction as of the most important departure in policy.

(3) One of the first consequences of intimate personal acquaintance with the details of the

business was the discovery of a necessity for stock-taking and balancing at short intervals. As has been explained in the last chapter, the volume of business transacted by Walter and Alfred Gilbey had exceeded all expectation for some years before Henry Gilbey joined them as an active partner. The first stock-taking took place at the end of 1858, twenty-one or twenty-two months after the start, and the balance-sheet showed a satisfactory profit; but the next balancing, at the end of 1859, disclosed no profit beyond a small interest on capital.

Stock-taking and balancing

To quote the words of one of the firm, "accountants and financial friends were called in, but two or three weeks of search proved fruitless, for still there appeared to be no reward for the labour of principals." This was not only disappointing, but puzzling to the last degree; seeing that the growth of the business had been all that could be desired—could not reasonably have been expected to be greater.

To solve the mystery, it was resolved to apply the microscope. Stock and balance were taken at the end of the next quarter, and the next after that, when the secret of disappointment was at length revealed. Eagerness to extend the business had outrun discretion and was eating up the legitimate profits. The firm had been making the pace at too

View of MAYENCE on the Rhine, Germany where W & A GILBEY'S Hocks and Moselles are stored

high a speed, and now learnt to regulate it with fuller knowledge of their exact standing. From that day to the present—a period of nearly fifty years—there has been no break in the quarterly balancing and stock-taking. When the firm was converted into a limited liability company in 1893, the practice was instituted of paying interest on the debenture stock quarterly instead of, like most Companies, half-yearly.

It may appear to many business men that the advantage of this practice is incommensurate with the additional labour involved ; and no doubt in some branches of trade and industry such a proceeding would be impracticable. But none will deny the power gained by an administration which knows exactly how it stands at any period of the year, what profits are being earned in every season, and when expansion may be undertaken without interrupting the accumulation of dividend. The frequent recurrence of a day of reckoning keeps it constantly before the attention of administration and staff ; no step is decided on, no action taken, except in full knowledge that the lapse of a few weeks, at most, will expose it to the scrutiny of the auditors.

Much of the prosperity of Gilbeys must be attributed to the frequent and fearless disclosure of results by quarterly stock-takings :

in fact, it is the opinion of the directors that this practice has had more influence upon the success of their enterprise than any other single cause, except the establishment of the agency system.

Benefits to customers

(4) It cannot be denied that, as pioneers in the trade with low-priced wines, W & A Gilbey have had to win their way through an immense amount of prejudice. Those persons who had been in the habit of paying high prices for the choicest wines could not be brought to believe that the abatement of the duty from one shilling to twopence a bottle admitted the importation of an immense quantity of pure, sound and palatable wine, such as had never found its way to England since the days of Queen Elizabeth. Even at this day, fifty years after the Cobden treaty, many people are possessed with the idea that cheapness is synonymous with inferiority, and are guided in purchasing by name and price rather than by quality.

Of course, there are plenty of others who have discriminating palates and are excellent judges of wine, but whose cellars, it may be, have been stocked for a generation or more by one or other of the old-established firms. The sentiment which makes them unwilling to withdraw their custom from old friends is a

VIEW OF REIMS, CHAMPAGNE DISTRICT, FRANCE.

praiseworthy one. It finds expression in the last paragraph of the following letter. It was not until near the close of Mr. Gladstone's long life that he had any dealings with the firm of Gilbeys, either as a customer or in any other way, except that he was personally acquainted with more than one of the partners, and occasionally conferred with them on public matters. His treatment of the wine duties, however, was the foundation of certain malevolent insinuations that he was in some way pecuniarily interested in the success of the firm, and more than once he took public occasion to deny emphatically that he had any connection whatever with the business. Four years before his death, however, having been recommended by his doctor to drink a certain astringent kind of wine, and having failed to obtain it elsewhere, he applied to Messrs. Gilbey as being likely, with their extensive connections, to be able to supply him. After some little trouble they succeeded in doing so, and their services were gracefully acknowledged as follows :—

"Hawarden, August 27th, 1894.

"Dear Sirs,

"You have indeed outstripped all my requests, and I thank you very much. . . .

"I may truly say that I have always regarded the proceedings of your firm with a peculiar interest.

You have been, as far as I am able to form an opinion, in an eminent sense, and in a degree with which no one can compete, the openers of the wine trade. The process has, I trust, been satisfactory to yourselves: it has certainly been one highly beneficial to the country: and (like the really great enterprise of Messrs. Cook) you stand outside and above the rank of ordinary commercial houses.

"(Private)—I should myself long ago have carried to you my insignificant custom, but for my systematic disinclination to part company with those whom I have long known and dealt with.

"I remain, dear Sirs,

"With much respect,

"Faithfully yours,

"W. E. GLADSTONE."

Starting business in 1857, Gilbeys could not expect and did not attempt to draw away customers from houses of long standing and well-merited prestige. They determined to make wine what it had not been for centuries—a commercial article instead of a luxury; and in order to do so they had to convince customers not only that they got what they paid for, but that what they paid was in fair proportion to the cost of production. The classes whom the reduction in price was leading to drink French wines instead of beer or spirits could not pay for a fancy article. Messrs. Gilbey laid themselves out, and the agency system lent itself,

View of SAUMUR, on the River Loire, France, the Centre of the Saumur Sparkling Wine District

to supply the growing demand for cheap wines; hence the name of the firm became associated specially with that class of commodity. Englishmen had been accustomed for so many generations to regard wine as an expensive luxury that price had become to most of them the main test of quality, and the firm have had to live down a good deal of banter, good-humoured and otherwise. But, as the Scottish saying runs, "facts are chiels that winna ding." The firm of Gilbeys attained, in a few years, such a commanding position and range of choice in the wine-producing districts as to be able to secure the finest growths upon very favourable terms. Customers, rapidly increasing in number, were admitted to a full share in the advantage of these terms. They became aware that whatever article was asked for and supplied, whether of medium or the highest quality, the price asked from them was in constant and fair proportion to the cost of production.

An example of this may be found in the introduction, for the first time under its own name, of the sparkling wine of Saumur. In 1873 Alfred Gilbey and James Blyth, while visiting the Champagne district, discovered that large quantities of cheap sparkling wines produced on the lower Loire were being shipped to England and sold there as

champagne. Now as Saumur lies fully two hundred miles west-south-west of Epernay, this was clearly misleading to the consumer, and could not be justified upon any pretext—geographical, climatic or otherwise. Arrangements, therefore, were made at once for the importation into Britain of the fine wine of Saumur under its own name, and its introduction to customers upon its own merits and at a price corresponding to the cost, which, of course, is much less than that of the best champagne. The result was thoroughly satisfactory; saumur is now well known and popular, and very large sales are effected annually.

No secret commission paid on orders

(5) The remaining feature of those mentioned as distinguishing the method pursued by Messrs. Gilbey is not the least important in regard to profit-earning. No commission, secret or otherwise, beyond the fixed percentage to permanent agents, has ever been paid, nor rebate allowed, upon any order from any source. The management, therefore, informed by quarterly stock-taking, can calculate to a nicety the profit to be earned from the turnover, and is relieved from the necessity for haggling over terms. Customers also—those, at least, who understand the principles of trade—have the satisfaction of feeling that the only addition to the cost of production

View of BEAUNE Burgundy District, France, where W & A GILBEY'S Burgundies are stored

which is exacted from them is the fair profit of the trader and the fixed percentage of the retailer.

No trade secrets

The firm of Gilbeys have never adopted the principle of trade secrets. Any special causes which have been found to contribute to their remarkable success have been freely communicated to those who cared to know them. It is in pursuance of these open tactics that, for more than thirty years past, Messrs. Gilbey have contributed to the *Times* an annual statement of the character and the results of European vintages. At first people were inclined to look askance upon these communications as an indirect form of advertisement by a pushing trade house ; but the soundness and abundance of information which Gilbeys' connection with continental producers enabled them to collect, and the frankness with which all features, favourable and the reverse, were stated, have caused this annual letter to be regarded as authoritative in no common degree.

Visitors to the great offices of the firm in Oxford Street cannot but receive an impression from the absence of mystery pervading every department. Everything seems to be open to inspection ; and one of the features which is sure to attract notice is the vast collection of

folios, consisting of a separate book for every one of more than three thousand agencies. The system herein represented was begun in very early days, and has been found of the utmost value. Each agency has every one of its transactions entered in its own book, cash and goods figuring for each year from the beginning of the agency to date, thus forming an elaboration of a bank's system of pass-books.

A few extracts have been given above from the confidential reports made by partners on their periodical continental tours to their colleagues. These reports contain an immense amount of information of general interest as well as entertaining matter ; but the temptation to quote extensively from them must be resisted lest due limits of space should be exceeded. But a few paragraphs from the report made in 1876 may be reproduced as evidence not only of the minuteness of the information collected, but the scrupulous care taken that all the wines handled by the firm should be of a thoroughly genuine character, answering to the description printed on the labels.

Reports on continental travel, 1876

The travellers had been visiting a number of *bodegas* and *lodges* in the Peninsula, not only with the object of making purchases of

View of JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA. Sherry District. Spain. where W & A GILBEY S Sherries are stored.

sherries and ports, but of testing the quality of the vast output from districts not in direct communication with English consumers. Their report is so voluminous and enters so minutely into technical details that it is difficult to choose any passage to suit the purpose of illustration, but the following may serve.

Messrs. Charles Gold and James Blyth had been examining the district of Tarragona. It is well understood that the process of making the red wines of the Peninsula differs from that pursued in France and Germany. Owing to the greater amount of saccharine in the grapes compared with those of more northerly vineyards, alcohol is added to the must at a certain stage to check fermentation and to preserve some of the natural sweetness of the fruit. This is their report: —

"We now desire to give you our general impressions of the district, its capabilities of producing wine, the varieties suitable for export, and the means we think should be adopted to purchase most economically the wines we require. Only a few years back the wines of Tarragona were consumed exclusively in their natural state like claret, and, after meeting the wants at home, the remainder of the enormous production was shipped chiefly to the Spanish possessions in America, just the same as a large quantity of natural wine goes from Lisbon and Oporto to the Portuguese possessions. In course of time, however, a demand for strong wine sprang up

from these colonies, and spirits being easily obtainable, a wine was soon supplied to them inferior, no doubt, in quality to port, but much cheaper in price, and therefore it was not surprising that this wine should find its way to England after the reduction of duty in 1860. Previously, of course, it was excluded by a duty of 5*s.* 9*d.* a gallon.

"The close relationship and constant communication existing between Spain and her colonies, and also from the fact that over 100,000 pipes of Spanish red wines are annually shipped to the latter, have created constant applications for various descriptions of white and sweet wines, and a feeling naturally existing not to refuse business has caused Tarragona to become already, to a small extent, a depôt for so-called *façon* wines. Therefore, in almost every establishment we have visited, besides tasting the natural produce of this district, we have had shown us, and sometimes with a certain amount of pride, wines labelled port, sherry, claret, madeira, &c., but grown in the Tarragona vineyards—not to forget Reus champagne, which was so detestable that there is little fear of any other country desiring to purchase it.

"With regard to the red wines of Tarragona, we believe the trade is only in its infancy, for the quantity produced is yearly increasing, and there is every prospect of the quality improving, as the farmers understand the use of spirit more in the earlier stages of fermentation. In this, our first visit, we have had to confine our observations to the merchants, and although it has given us an excellent preliminary insight into the business, it has

VIEW OF TARRAGONA, SPAIN.

not provided us with all the information necessary to enable us to make purchases."

Alfred Gilbey and James Blyth had the advantage, during this tour, of the company of the senior partner in one of the oldest firms in Jerez, and it is agreeable to read the confidential expression of their opinion of him, which, though formed thirty years ago, the firm of Gilbeys have never had occasion to alter :—

"Don Manuel M. Gonzalez* returned to Montilla at the same time as we started for Madrid; and, after expressing our appreciation at the efforts he had made so that our journey should be a pleasant and useful one, we bade him farewell, and our first hour in the train was devoted to speaking of his many admirable qualities, his knowledge of his business, his activity, his respect for other people's opinions, and an absence of any conceit about his own, and we came to the conclusion that not only Spain, but any country, might be proud to own him."

* Don Gonzalez died in the autumn of 1886.

CHAPTER III.

Château Loudenne.

In eighteen years from its commencement the business of W & A Gilbey had grown to such dimensions as should satisfy any reasonable ambition. But ambition, "that last infirmity of noble minds," sometimes gives reason the go-by and pants for wider conquest. So it came to pass that the heads of the firm, who had fared so splendidly by acting as wholesale distributor to the "off" licence middleman retailer, aspired to extend their sphere to that of the producer also. This aspiration might have been outweighed by prudence, but for other considerations of a weighty character.

The prosperity of the business had its foundation largely in the sale of French wines, and, among French wines, those of the Gironde were chiefly dealt with. As

ARCHWAY ENTRANCE TO CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE.

the trade increased in volume the necessity became greater for an *entrepôt* where the large purchases of wines of the Médoc might be collected, stored, and matured before shipment to England. Instead, therefore, of acquiring a mere warehouse in Bordeaux, the partners determined to purchase a vineyard, with suitable buildings, in the very heart of the claret district.*

Purchase of Château Loudenne, 1875

An opportunity of carrying this design into effect offered itself in 1875, when the firm purchased from the Vicomtesse de Marcellus (a relative of the celebrated Chateaubriand) the estate of Château Loudenne, situated on the west side of the estuary of the Gironde, about thirty-five miles north of Bordeaux, at the junction of Haut and Bas Médoc. The property extended to about 470 acres, whereof perhaps a half was suited for growing vines, the remainder being corn and meadow land.

Now claret was at the height of its favour

* It is a curious fact that the name "claret," universally applied by English speakers to the red wines of the Médoc, has no place in the modern French language. In old French, *clairet*, from the Low Latin *claretum*, signified a wine "cleared" with honey, white of egg, etc. Old French remained the language of the English Court and law courts till the reign of Edward III., and we have retained the word "claret" long after its disuse by Frenchmen.

in the United Kingdom in 1875* ; the ravages of the *phylloxera* had not yet affected the vines of the Médoc ; consequently this fine estate could not be had for a song. The price paid for it, including the *château* or country house and the usual cellars and out-buildings, was 700,000 francs (£28,000), being within a fraction of £60 an English acre, added to which was the tax of £2,800 exacted by the French Government as transfer of land duty, being ten per cent. on the value of the property.

But the new lords of Loudenne were not content merely to step into the shoes of the vendor of the estate. To fit the premises for their purpose required a further heavy outlay. A new *chais* or wine stores and offices were built, as well as a *cuvier* or press-house and workpeople's cottages ; the farm-buildings were entirely reconstructed and additions made to the château ; a harbour was made in the Gironde,

* A change of taste, or else a "wave of temperance," has caused a notable diminution in the consumption of wine in the United Kingdom since 1875. The following table shows the comparison of the imports in two years, with corresponding effect upon the public revenue :—

Year	French Wines Imported into the United Kingdom	Total Wines Imported from all Countries	Duty Paid
	Gallons	Gallons	
1876	6,745,710	18,660,846	£1,738,555
1905	3,620,163	11,945,599	£1,175,789

Had the consumption per head remained the same, the increase of the population by about one-third during this period would have brought the total consumption up to about 25,000,000 gallons.

A VIEW OF CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE, FROM THE RIVER.

with a tramway from the *chais*, for the shipment of wines ; in short, no expense was stinted to make Château Loudenne a model vineyard. The capital subsequently sunk in new works and improvements has far exceeded the price paid for the estate, amounting, up to date, to £64,500.

Of the vine-lands, only about one-third was planted with vines when Messrs. Gilbey came into possession—namely, about sixty acres. Twelve years after the purchase, 125 acres had been added to the vineyards, and much of the former extent had been replanted with young vines. The cost of planting and making new vineland may be taken at £20 per acre on an average. The increased production of the property in consequence of these vigorous measures may be seen in the following table :—

	Hogsheads		Hogsheads		Hogsheads
1875	180	1886	533	1897	636
1876	261	1887	401	1898	599
1877	356	1888	1,181	1899	832
1878	343	1889	1,124	1900	1,440
1879	245	1890	650	1901	1,624
1880	212	1891	881	1902	1,014
1881	232	1892	747	1903	987
1882	235½	1893	1,399	1904	1,135
1883	255½	1894	794	1905	972
1884	273	1895	444	1906	1,020*
1885	300	1896	609		

*A hogshead of claret contains about 48 gallons, equal to 300 bottles. Therefore, while the production of Château Loudenne in 1875 amounted to only 4,140 dozens, or, say, 54,000 bottles, that in 1906 was 25,750 dozens or 309,000 bottles.

The expansion of the productive capacity of Château Loudenne has brought an immense increase of employment into the neighbourhood. The wage-bill in 1875 was computed at £516 18*s.* 7*d.*; whereas at the present time the current expenses on the property cannot be reckoned at less than £6,000 or £7,000 a year.

Gold Medal of Department of Agriculture awarded to Loudenne, 1887

The immediate result of this lavish expenditure was to transform the estate into a vineyard of the utmost cultivation and productiveness; so much so that in 1887 there was awarded to the proprietors the Gold Medal given by the French Minister of Agriculture for the best managed vineyard in the Gironde. Whereas vine culture was brought to greater perfection in no part of the world than in the district of Médoc, the legitimate inference is highly complimentary to the English firm. After this it was a comparatively easy effort to win a Gold Medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1900, and the Gold Medal and Diploma of the Agricultural Society of the Médoc in 1901.

Previous to the year when Messrs. Gilbey acquired Château Loudenne, the Médoc had scarcely been visited by that terrible insect scourge, *Phylloxera vastatrix*, a species of plant aphis which came to Europe from North America, and is endowed with such prodigious fecundity that it has been calculated that one

PLOUGHING BETWEEN THE ROWS OF VINES, CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE

female dying in March would have over twenty-five millions of descendants in October.* The life history of this creature is well understood. Like many other genera of *Aphidæ*, it appears in different forms, winged or wingless, in a fixed cycle of generations. The form which devastates the vineyard is a wingless one which descends in millions to the roots, saps the vitality of the vine by sucking its juices, arrests its fertility, and ultimately destroys the plant. The loss caused by this parasite in the years of its prevalence was simply incalculable. When it appeared in the Médoc there seemed no escape from ruin before many of the smaller men; for inundation, the only remedy then known, was impracticable on the gravelly slopes where the claret grape ripens.

Phylloxera vastatrix, *the vine aphid*

Even after chemical remedies were devised, none but wealthy growers could afford to apply them; the cost of treatment with sulpho-carbonate of potassium being estimated, at the Bordeaux Conference of 1881, at £11 4*s.* per acre the first year and £8 per acre the second year. The cost, however, became greatly reduced as chemicals became cheaper

* This is a very moderate computation beside that of some entomologists. A writer in the *Agricultural Gazette*, in September, 1887, calculated that there were five or six generations born in one year, and that the descendants of a single female would number 62,500,000,000 in the third generation!

owing to a regular demand, and in 1888 the cost of treatment at Château Loudenne was only £3 9*s.* 7*d.* an acre, or, say, £400 for the whole vineland. To this, however, must be added the expense of replanting where the vines had been destroyed, and the supply of American stocks, which are relatively immune from the parasite, on which to graft the favourite vines of the Médoc.

The first appearance of the *phylloxera* was almost simultaneous with the purchase of Château Loudenne by the Gilbeys, and the new proprietors were put to enormous expense in combating the plague when it extended its ravages to their land. But the free soaking of the soil with sulpho-carbonate, and the grafting of the favourite Cabernet-Sauvignon, Malbec, and Merlot grapes upon American stocks, prevailed against the evil, so that in a few seasons the slopes were clothed once more with a uniform density of verdure betokening perfect health.

The claret vintage

A visit to the historic district of the Médoc in the golden atmosphere of September is a pleasure not to be easily forgotten; for that month is normally the culmination of the incessant labour of the rest of the year in the vineyards. Thrice only in the nineteenth century did the vintage begin in August—namely, in 1822, in 1865, and

CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE UNLOADING CLARET PURCHASED FROM NEIGHBOURING ESTATES

in 1893. In seventeen years commencement was delayed till October, the latest opening on record being in the year 1816, when no grapes were put in the press till the 27th of that month.

To reach Château Loudenne from Bordeaux the traveller has the alternative of three modes of conveyance—the rail, the river, and the road. If he is wise he will eschew the first, unless he is pressed for time. Even if his hurry be urgent, he may fare better by doing so, for the trains are few and leisurely. The river may attract him, for the steamers are commodious and well handled, and will land him on the quay of La Maréchale after a run of three hours—less or more according to the tides, which run very strong. The first two or three miles are interesting, the swift current of the Garonne, intensely opaque, with the colour of *café-au-lait*, sweeping crescent-wise between the majestic wharfs and storehouses on either bank. Then the shores become reed-fringed, thickly set with villas nestling in rich verdure. But after confluence with the Dordogne, which converts the Garonne into the broad yellow estuary of the Gironde, the shores recede so far that the view is a trifle monotonous.

The true way to enjoyment (and to speed also, if you have command of a motor) is to make the journey by road. The route lies to

the north and west, through the heart of the Médoc—*in medio aquæ*—the long, broad promontory lying between the Bay of Biscay and the yellow waters of the Gironde, a district without a rival in the world for the combined quality and purity of its wines. Once clear of the far-reaching suburbs of Bordeaux, where the villas of prosperous merchants form a long chain of gardens and shady pleasure-grounds, the eye ranges over league upon league of gently undulating ground closely planted with vines. The richness of the prospect enables one to sympathise with the passionate reluctance of our Plantagenet kings to part with such a splendid heritage, and explains, if it cannot justify, the policy of the Hundred Years War, the prize of which was possession of Guienne and Gascony.

Only in one respect may the newcomer feel a shade of disappointment, especially if he has beheld

> "The castled palaces of France
> Shine on the Loire in summer green."

Every vineyard of note in the Médoc has its château, but not on the scale of Chenonceaux or Chaumont. The land is too precious to be spared for spacious pleasure grounds, and most of the châteaux are modest country houses; but the luxuriance and variety of trees and shrubs crowded round them kindle envy in the

LOUDENNE—THE AVENUE AND CHÂTEAU.

breast of the English amateur. The names carved over the gateways read as familiar to the traveller as those of the great battle-fields of Europe. Some flippant writer has remarked that the map of the district is like one great wine list. The Châteaux Palmer, Brane-Cantenac and Kirwan may be noted before entering the commune of Margaux, in which the vineyard of Château Margaux, planted in 1750, holds pre-eminence, as producing one of the four *premiers crus*, according to the official classification.

Other estates of high renown line the route leading through the commune of Margaux to that of Saint-Julien. Château Beychevelle owes its name to a former owner, the Duc d'Epernon, who, being Lord High Admiral of France, was entitled to a salute from all vessels passing his tower. This was performed by lowering topsails, hence mariners named it Château Baisse-Voile, corrupted into Beychevelle.

Château Langoa has one of the best equipped *chais* in the district. Entering the commune of Pauillac, we pass Latour and Lafite, for the latter of which the Rothschilds paid more than £1,000 an acre in 1868—£180,000 in all. These two, with Haut-Brion and Château Margaux, make up the quartette of first growths; but we are here close to Mouton Rothschild the first

of the second growths, to Châteaux Pichon-Longueville, Gruaud-Larose, the two Léovilles, and other vineyards, in the produce whereof only the most fastidious palate may detect inferiority.

" Je ne comprends pas quel expert inhabile
A pu dans les seconds classer le Léoville."

The road winds on like a white ribbon through the commune of Pauillac—one continuous vineyard, with here a wayside crucifix, there a tower like an old-fashioned dovecote, marking the marches of estates. Speed must be reduced to a crawl to traverse the narrow streets of Pauillac, giving the traveller time to note what an opportunity has been lost in not crowning a magnificent site with something better than the ugly church which, far seen across sea and land, dominates this ancient town.

Leaving Pauillac by its northern exit, we enter the district of Saint-Estèphe, crowded with châteaux and vineyards bearing names which are as household words to Englishmen —Cos-Labory, Cos d'Estournel, Pontet-Canet, Montrose, Calon-Ségur, and so on—until, leaving on the right the riverine village of Saint-Yzans, the lofty gateway of Château Loudenne rises fair in view, set upon a hill so that it cannot be hidden, though the château

GATHERING GRAPES AT CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE.

itself is modestly screened by groves of elm and gleditschia. From the eminence whereon Loudenne stands, the spires of thirteen churches in neighbouring villages can be seen. For full five-and-thirty miles the journey from Bordeaux to Loudenne has been through one continuous scene of strenuous industry, yet not industry of the kind to mar the face of nature or to taint air and water. Brisk and bracing, the atmosphere rolls in from the Bay of Biscay across the pine-covered Landes ; no smoke dims the splendour of the sun ; no squalor or filth offends the eye. Men and women move slowly in serried lines, waist deep in the thick foliage, each company of twenty or thirty under control of a *chef de manœuvre*, who carries a long wand of office.

The various duties of these companies have been the same from immemorial time. Women and girls, in deep sun-bonnets, go before, cutting the bunches ; behind each goes a *vide-panier*, to take her basket when it is full, supply her with another, and to empty the full one into the shoulder-bucket of the *porteur*, who carries it to the end of the vine-row, where stands an ox-cart with two enormous tubs or *douilles*. The grapes are emptied into these tubs, which together contain enough grapes to produce two hogsheads of wine ; and, when

the *charge* is complete, the cart crawls off to the *cuvier*, where the grapes are pressed. The slowness of these magnificent dun oxen, standing sixteen or seventeen hands high, is ill-suited to the notions of a British agriculturist, accustomed to quick-stepping Shire or Clydesdale horses; wherefore one of the earliest reforms initiated by the new owners of Château Loudenne was to substitute horses for oxen in the work of farm and vineyard. But of late years they have reverted to the oxen as more suitable to the purpose, and although in this and other vineyards some horses are employed in certain descriptions of field labour, oxen greatly preponderate in the district. It is better so—for the lover of the picturesque anyhow—for these mild-eyed, patient creatures seem more in keeping with the landscape with which they have been so long associated.

More than two thousand years have passed since that most versatile of authors, Marcus Terentius Varro, indulged in rhapsody over these grand animals. The finest of them, says he, "they fatten as victims for the sacrifices to the gods; and, without doubt, they are to be preferred for sacred purposes, because of the dignity of their proportions and their fine colour."*

Slow as they are, when the vintage is in

* Varro, *De Re Rusticâ*, lib. ii., cap. 5

CARTING GRAPES TO THE PRESS-HOUSE AT CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE.

full swing, a couple of these ox-carts bring to the *cuvier* as much as can be handled there, spacious as it is. About 20 tons of grapes pass through the *égrappoir* and press daily, yielding about 80 hogsheads of 46 gallons each. Needless to say that the primitive custom of treading out the grapes with the bare feet is obsolete in all but the most conservative establishments, among which is Château Lafite. The cart is drawn up, not without vociferous shouting to the oxen, under the crane of the *cuvier;* the mighty tubs are swung into the upper floor and emptied into the *pressoir*, whence a couple of stout fellows in wooden sabots shovel the purple fruit into the *égrappoir*, which strips the stalks and throws them to one side, before the grapes are crushed. From the press flows a carmine stream through a channel in the floor to the vat below, where we may leave it to undergo the subsequent processes of fermentation, fining and *décuvage—i.e.*, drawing off into hogsheads.

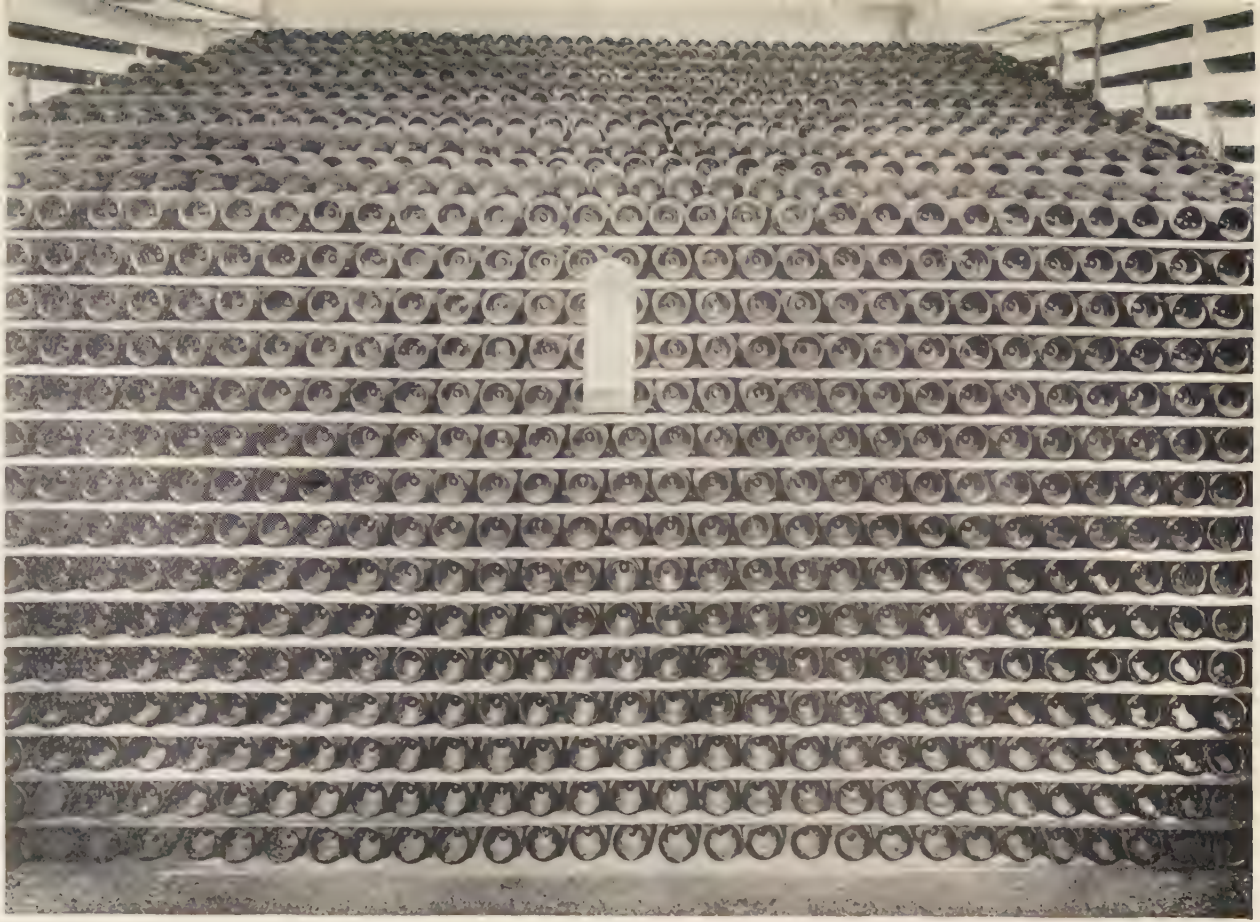
Greatly as the output of the Loudenne vineyards has been increased since Messrs. Gilbey acquired the property (namely, as already shown, from 180 hogsheads in 1875 to 1,030 hogsheads in 1906), the scale of the *chais*, or wine stores, greatly exceeds the requirements of a single *cuvier* or wine press. Ten thousand

hogsheads may be stored in the *chais*, and there is cellarage for 400,000 bottles; whereby the purpose is fulfilled of having an *entrepôt* on the spot for the storage of wines purchased from other vineyards, which are matured at Château Loudenne before exportation to England.

In years of good and prolific vintages, when large purchases of clarets have been made from the neighbouring estates of the Médoc, the *chais* and *caves* have been full to overflowing with the entire crops of some of the principal vineyards, such as those of Châteaux Lafite, Margaux, Haut-Brion, Langoa, Pontet Canet, etc.

Work of various kinds among the vines is almost incessant throughout the year; for, besides the operations of pruning, manuring, replanting, spraying, etc., every yard of the ground has to be ploughed four times in each year. Cooperage, also, and a variety of other subsidiary operations, keep a number of hands constantly employed, and to house these Messrs. Gilbey have erected eight-and-twenty comfortable cottages. In the busy weeks of the vintage, therefore, very little external help is required, the families of the regular labourers being nearly equal to the requirements of the season.

It may appear strange that, considering the



A BIN OF 1,000 DOZENS OF W & A GILBEY'S CHATEAU LOUDENNE CLARET.

perfection of appliances, the large amount of claret produced at Loudenne and the emphatic encomium pronounced by the French Department of Agriculture upon its cultivation as being the best in the Médoc in 1887, no place has been accorded to the wine of this château among the recognised *crus* or "growths." Especially strangely must it strike anybody who has drunk that excellent wine that it only ranks as *bourgeois*—that is, as among the superior unclassified growths—and this anomaly can only be explained by the fact that no machinery exists for revising the classification of wines periodically. It is even uncertain when the classification was fixed, though it is known to have been in force during the reign of the Grand Monarque. Napoléon I. interfered in favour of a friend who owned the vineyard of Château Montrose, in the Médoc, and, in deference to the desire of the autocrat, that estate was accorded the degree of "second growth." Then, in 1845, there was a conference of wine-brokers at Bordeaux, when the existing classification was considered and confirmed ; but that was long before improved cultivation was applied to the Château Loudenne vineyards. Now, whereas the quality of wine depends primarily on the nature of the soil and secondarily upon good cultivation and treatment of the produce, it is impossible

that the improved methods applied at immense cost by Messrs. Gilbey can have been without effect upon the character of their claret, and this, no doubt, would receive due recognition were the ancient classification to be revised.

Seeing that names count for so much in the estimation of British claret-drinkers, and that a good deal of misunderstanding prevails among them as to the exact significance of these names, the following quotation may be found interesting from a paper contributed by Messrs. W & A Gilbey to the *Wine and Spirit News* in 1882 :—

"Each commune bears a celebrated name, such as Margaux, St. Julien, St. Estèphe, etc. These communes, however, are often of great extent, and hence an error somewhat common in England, where it is frequent to hear the wines of Margaux and Château Margaux spoken of as one and the same thing, or, similarly, wines described as St. Estèphe, St. Julien, etc. It is true Château Margaux is situated in the commune of that name; that St. Estèphe can boast of having in its neighbourhood Châteaux Lafite and Latour; St. Julien has Larose, Pichon-Longueville, Léoville, &c.; but it is forgotten that, while Château Margaux may be worth in some years £60 per hogshead, there are many wines produced in the Margaux, St. Estèphe, and St. Julien districts which can be bought at from £6 to £10 per hogshead.

"Another point also not sufficiently understood

BOTTLING THE WINES OF CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE.

by ordinary consumers of claret is the great variation in price between the wines of such estates as Château Margaux and Château Lafite in different years, according to the success or non-success of the vintage. Thus while, as we have said, in a good year the wines of Châteaux Margaux and Lafite may be worth £60 per hogshead, in other years a common wine of the country, at £6 or £7 per hogshead, would be a better purchase. For these years of non-success the inhabitants of the Médoc have a special name, when they say of an inferior year, 'Dont on ne fait pas des bouteilles.'

"When we speak of wine costing £60 per hogshead, it must be borne in mind that this price is at least doubled before the wine arrives at consumption, on account of the cost of bottling, interest of money, and expenses of all kinds. The higher-class wines are not usually put into bottle until the end of three or four years."

In connection with the above must be reckoned the heavy decline that has taken place since 1882 in the value of Médoc wines, and, indeed, in wines of all kinds. This has affected high-class clarets in a far greater degree than the *bourgeois* growths; indeed the price of Château Margaux during the last twenty years has not reached the average of half of £60 per hogshead which it commanded during the sixties to seventies.

In this question of names is contained one of the chief difficulties with which Messrs. Gilbey,

in common with all other vendors of pure foreign wines, have to contend, arising from the spurious description given to wines manufactured in Britain. These wines are made from *must* in which fermentation has been suspended by pasteurisation, imported duty free into this country, where fermentation is resumed, and the product is sold under the titles of the best known wines.

Spurious Wines

The Revenue Act of 1905, it is hoped, will check this fraudulent traffic to some extent, inasmuch as it brings all makers of so-called "wines" under license and supervision of the Excise; but the system under which the makers of spurious wines are exempted from the heavy duties paid by honest importers is one of glaring injustice to every respectable wine-merchant. It is highly desirable, in the interest alike of consumers in general and of producers of the genuine article, that this nefarious traffic should be brought to a permanent stop by the imposition of a duty equal to that paid upon foreign wines.

GLEN-SPEY POT STILL DISTILLERY, ROTHES. MORAYSHIRE.

GLEN-SPEY DISTILLERY—A BONDED STORE

CHAPTER IV.

The Distilleries, Bonded Stores, and Export Department.

Reference has been made in a previous chapter to the marked diminution in the consumption of French wines, especially claret, in the United Kingdom during the last quarter of a century. This may be traced to several causes. As regards clarets of superior growth, the universal appearance of cigarettes after dinner must be held chiefly accountable; for Englishmen had acquired the habit, so astonishing to Frenchmen, of drinking their best claret *after* dinner, instead of at the proper time—during a meal. Fine claret and tobacco smoke are mutually incompatible, so Lafite and Haut-Brion have waned before the all-prevailing "Lady Nicotine." As to the diminished consumption of light clarets, doctors must be held partly responsible, owing to the frequency with which, of late years, they have recommended their patients to substitute whisky and water for wine. Whether this has been to the advantage or not of the general health of the community must be left for decision by the medical

profession. As purveyors to the public, Messrs. Gilbey have had to supply a greatly increased demand for whisky.

"What *is* whisky?" being a question that has lately assumed an acute form, and, at the time of writing, is the subject of litigation still pending, may be one for suspense of judgment. Historically, no doubt, "usquebagh"—*anglicé*, "whisky"—is a spirit distilled from malted barley, but of late years many distillers have substituted Indian corn and patent stills for the orthodox barley mash and pot stills.

Purchase of Distilleries in 1887, 1895, and 1904

Nearly thirty years ago some of the partners in Gilbeys, visiting a whisky-blender in Scotland, were shown how the profit on whisky might be considerably increased by adding patent still grain spirit; but no advantage was taken of this information by the firm, because they were of opinion that genuine whisky could not be produced except from malted barley, and that customers asking for whisky were entitled to receive spirit distilled from that and no other grain. They resolved, therefore, to ensure this by becoming their own distillers. Indian corn might produce a wholesome and palatable spirit, but to offer that for sale, whether unmixed or blended, as "Pure Highland Malt Whisky" would

W & A GILBEY'S DISTILLERY, STRATHMILL, KEITH, BANFFSHIRE, N.B.

be to violate a cardinal principle of their business, which had been, from the first, to sell nothing except under a literally correct description.

Accordingly, in October, 1887, Messrs. Gilbey acquired a distillery in Strathspey, in the Glenlivet district, famous for the quality of its barley and amply supplied with water. This establishment goes by the name of the Glen-Spey Distillery. Eight years later—in October, 1895—they bought the Strathmill Distillery, and in January, 1904, the Knockando Distillery, both in the same neighbourhood. From these three distilleries the annual output is now nearly 300,000 gallons of proof spirit. Nothing is used in the manufacture but pure malt made exclusively from barley grown in Scotland, and distilled in pot stills.

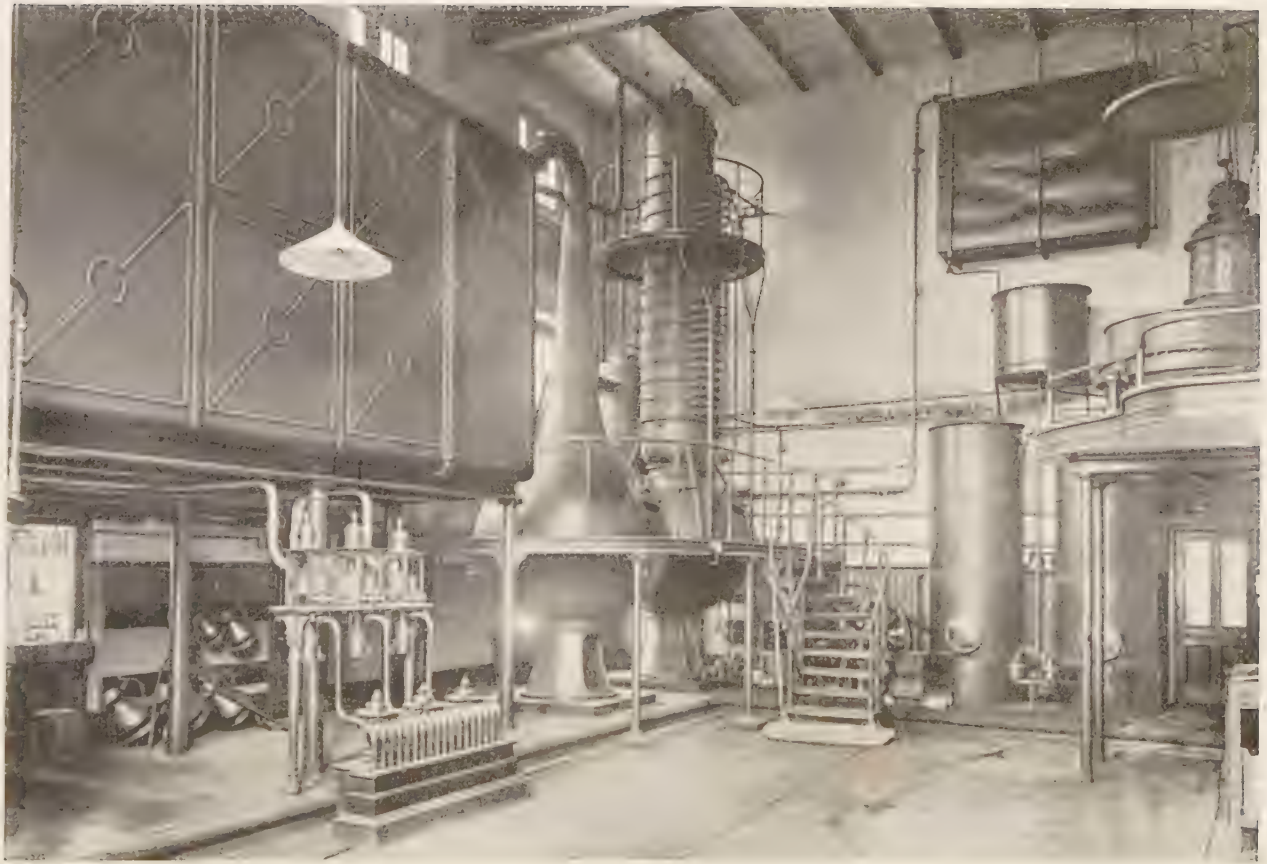
But whereas a taste has been acquired by part of the public for blended whisky, Messrs. Gilbey began in 1905 to meet the demand by buying the best patent still spirit which can be got, and, after blending it with their own barley malt pot still product, now sell it under labels describing it as a "Blend of Malt and Grain Whisky," so that customers shall understand exactly what they are buying. As yet, however, blended whisky forms a very small part of their trade. So much for Scotch whisky.

To meet the demand for Irish whiskey, the firm purchase their supply in Dublin, having come to the conclusion that the whiskey distilled in that city is the finest. The process of distillation differs slightly from that of Scotch whisky. All the Irish whiskey supplied by Messrs. Gilbey is pot still; but, to give it the flavour peculiar to the Irish spirit, a certain proportion of unmalted cereals is added to the malted barley in preparing the mash for distillation.

Irish whiskey

Many years ago, Messrs. Gilbey arranged with the well-known Distillers, John Jameson & Son (whose make of Dublin whiskey has always been recognised as holding first place among Irish whiskies), to bottle and sell their brands six and ten years old under the joint guarantee of the two firms.

Messrs. Gilbey's trade in spirits has attained proportions similar to that in foreign wines. Their stock of whisky amounts to nearly three million gallons, whereof the value in bond exceeds half a million sterling, to which must be added the duty of 11*s.* per proof gallon before it is cleared from bond for bottling. The possession of such an enormous stock enables them to supply none but thoroughly matured spirit.



CORNER OF W. & A. GILBEY'S LONDON GIN DISTILLERY.

At Camden Town, Messrs. Gilbey have a distillery for the production of the best London gin, a spirit whereof the consumption in the United Kingdom is still considerable, although a large proportion of the manufacture is for export. Now, whereas gin is not only the purest spirit that can be distilled—that is, the freest from by-products, such as fusil oil, etc.—but is also liable to have its delicate flavour impaired if kept long in a cask, the stock kept in bond is very small compared with that of whisky. Gin gains little or nothing from age; it is, therefore, bottled at once for exportation or home consumption. Nine-tenths of the dry gin trade in Australasia is in the hands of the firm; and very large quantities of "Old Tom" gin go to North and South American markets, from San Francisco, on the west, to all the Ports on the coast line southward, and so round by the Straits of Magellan and up the east coast to Manaos on the Amazon.

Gin distillery at Camden Town

The gin distillery occupies but a small section of the premises at Camden Town, which cover a floor area of about 20 acres, partly adjoining and partly included in the property of the London and North Western Railway. It is here, perhaps, that the magnitude of the

Warehouses at Camden Town

business is brought most forcibly to the apprehension of a casual visitor.

The first thing to attract attention, on entering the main floor of the principal building, are mountains—cliffs, rather—of wooden cases, each made to contain two dozen bottles, which are packed without straw, each bottle fitting into a separate compartment. These cases are for the home trade, which is subject to regular seasonal fluctuation on a very large scale. In December, during the weeks preceding Christmas, this traffic is at its height, as many as 4,000 or 5,000 two dozen cases being despatched daily. Across the centre of this great hall runs a rail about six feet above the floor, bearing, at intervals, the names of the principal railways. The cases are ranged here for consignment to their respective destinations.

In the vast annexes to this central hall, also, is transacted the bottling and labelling of spirits, which is now done entirely by women and girls.

Order and regularity are apparent everywhere ; everything moves smoothly and without fuss or confusion : but to ensure this there exists a complex organisation which does not meet the eye. To give a single example : the fluctuation in the home demand is sometimes so rapid that it is necessary to keep

W & A GILBEY'S BOTTLE WAREHOUSE ON THE REGENT'S CANAL.

an accurate *daily* record of stock. Without this it might happen that orders arriving could not be supplied without the delay incurred by getting spirits out of bond, where they have been maturing, and such delay would be fatal to precision and punctuality, which have been a distinguishing feature in the business of this firm from the outset, fifty years ago.

In charge of every floor, therefore, a foreman is appointed, and among his duties is that of knowing to a nicety the exact amount of the various liquors under his charge, whether in bottle or in cask, and to give timely notification before fresh supplies are required.

The floor below the Forwarding and Spirit Department is devoted to strong wines—port, Tarragona, sherry, etc.—and here may be seen the crimson or golden liquor flowing from the huge tuns into the bottling machines. As each case of bottles is filled it is wheeled off to be corked, and although all this work is conducted under electric light, the labour is not severe or unhealthy, for the ventilation of the whole premises is excellent. After corking, there only remains the labelling and, for spirits and some wines, the capsuling.

On a still lower floor are to be found the light wines—clarets, Rhine wines, etc.—where the same processes may be witnessed in full swing.

This large Duty Paid Warehouse was formerly used by the London and North Western Railway Company as their principal goods shed, and it still retains the old name of the "A" Shed. It gives, perhaps, a better idea of the work transacted than any of the other buildings; but it is eclipsed in height, and perhaps also in the number of acres of floor space, by an adjoining building, to which access is gained by a tunnel under the public road. This last-mentioned warehouse is devoted to the reception and storage of empty bottles, old and new, their examination under a strong light for the detection of flaws, and their washing in a variety of ingenious machines. The quantity of bottles washed daily is three hundred gross, equal to 43,200 bottles. But, perhaps, the proportion of waste may best indicate the extent of the industry in this department. "Broken metal"—*i.e.*, bottles either destroyed for flaws or accidentally broken—amounts, on an average, to no less than ten tons weight per week. The building, which was erected recently at a cost of £50,000, is an edifice of extraordinary stability, constructed entirely of concrete, six storeys in height. The strength of it may be estimated from the fact that on the fifth floor, which is devoted to the Engineering Department, there are two powerful steam engines working without any perceptible vibration in

THE DESPATCHING FLOOR, CAMDEN TOWN, A.D. 1907.

W. & A. GILBEY'S Cases being transported on the backs of Llamas across the high plains of the Bolivian Andes

the building. On the sixth floor, that of the carpenters, a saw-mill is busy at work, slicing a single beam simultaneously into six boards for the construction of packing cases. Even the roof of the building is made use of, for here are thousands of tons of timber stacked for seasoning in the open air.

The Export Department and Bonded Warehouses

To reach the Export Department, one crosses several lines of rails belonging to the London and North Western Railway. This branch of trade was first opened in 1877, and has developed so as to embrace markets in every part of the world, even in such outlandish and remote regions as Corea and Newchwang in the Far East, and the whole of South America in the Far West, including Bolivia, where Gilbey's cases may be seen transported across lonely mountain passes on the backs of llamas. "Invalid Port," strange to say, finds its way in large quantities to the Island of Java, whereof the torrid climate, one would think, is suggestive of a less stimulating beverage.

It would require a long day's march to traverse every part of the labyrinthine bonded warehouses containing Gilbey's stock for home and export trade. One feature among them must be well known by travellers to and from the north—namely, the huge circular shed, with pyramidal roof, which looms across the

intersecting line of the London and North Western Railway. This was originally built as an engine shed, before "turntables" were invented, and is now one of Messrs. Gilbey's numerous bonded stores. The rest of the liquor in bond is stored in a vast number of vaults, containing so much as to put it in the power of the firm to supply any conceivable demand for mature spirits at very short notice. In fact, it is not only the rule, but the practice, that if an order is received one morning to export a thousand cases in bond, they are shipped the following morning if the people at the docks are ready for it. To carry this into effect, a train, known as "Gilbey's Special," leaves Camden Town every day for the docks.

VIEW OF THE GREAT SALOON OF THE PANTHEON, LONDON,
FROM THE NORTH GALLERY. A.D. 1835.

CHAPTER V.

The Pantheon.

No memoir of the firm of Gilbeys, however succinct, could be deemed complete without some notice of the palatial premises in which the headquarters staff transact their business. Space, air, and light form its physical distinction, enabling the battalion of clerks and other officials to discharge their duties with order, ease and precision. How different is the quiet daily routine in these halls from the feverish revels of which they were the scene in the wicked old Regency days! A very entertaining volume might be compiled from the press-cuttings preserved in the office, enabling one to trace the chequered fortunes of the Pantheon from its foundation. While it was being built, in 1769, Horace Walpole wrote about it as follows to Lady Ossory :—

The Pantheon

"What do you think of a Winter Ranelagh erecting in Oxford Road at the expense of £60,000? If we laugh at the French they stare at us. Our enormous luxury and expense astonish them. I carried their Ambassador and a Comte de Levi to

see the Pantheon, which is almost finished. Imagine Baalbec in all its glory. It amazed me. The pillars are of artificial *giallo-antico*. The ceilings, even of the passages, are of the most beautiful stuccos in the best taste of the grotesque. The ceilings of the ball-room and the panels are painted like Raphael's *loggias* in the Vatican. A dome like the Roman Pantheon, glazed. Monsieur de Guisnes said to me, 'Ce n'est qu'à Londres qu'on peut faire cela.'"

James Wyatt was the architect of this prodigy, which was first opened in December, 1772, as "a place of evening entertainment for the Nobility and Gentry," the great door in Poland Street being "reserved for Ladies' Chairs only." The proprietors aimed at being very exclusive, refusing to accept subscriptions except on the recommendation of peeresses, explaining that their desire was

"to prevent such people only from obtaining Subscriptions whose Appearance might not only be improper, but subversive of that Elegance and Propriety which they wish on every occasion to preserve . . . . by which Means those whose Situation and Character will entitle them to a Place amongst People of Fashion and Politeness may, by applying at the Pantheon, be accommodated with Subscription."

Said subscription was fixed at six guineas for the season, and the monthly entertainments consisted of concerts, balls and masquerades.

THE PANTHEON, OXFORD ROAD, A.D. 1829.

At first all the proceedings were dignified and, perhaps, proportionately dull; but the precautions taken by the proprietors to maintain respectability were doomed, like other "best-laid plans of mice and men," to succumb under the test of time. Whether peeresses of the late Georgian era were not sufficiently scrupulous on the score of propriety, or whether the proprietors found themselves compelled to relax the rigidity of censorship in order to make the concern pay, certain it is that ladies of high rank who attended assemblies in the Pantheon rubbed shoulders with very queer characters and were apt to find themselves involved in desperate orgies. The Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.) and his brothers seldom missed a masquerade, and it is strange to read, in the reports of the *Morning Post* and *Morning Herald*, a long list of titled and untitled persons who accompanied him, to which is invariably added some such statement as that "the Cyprian sisterhood were most of them present." Descriptions of the charms and behaviour of damsels who can scarcely have been admitted on the vouchers of peeresses are vivid and detailed, but are conveyed in terms far too frank for quotation in this chaste twentieth century.

Sometimes a line *was* drawn, but it was only a temporary one of red cord, with which,

on a night in April, 1772, a space in the centre of the room was roped off, and a ballet was performed by the following ladies and gentlemen, "in elegant fancy dress of white, blue and silver, with Henry the Eighth kind of hats, diamond buttons and feathers":—

1. H.R.H. the Prince of Wales
2. Lord Lewisham
3. Lord Herbert
4. Hon. Mr. G. Pitt
5. The Marquis of Graham
6. Colonel Phipps
7. Major St. Leger
8. Mr. Churchill

1. The Duchess of Devonshire
2. Lady Duncannon
3. Lady Salisbury
4. Lady A. Campbell
5. Lady Jersey
6. Lady L. Nugent
7. Miss Ingram
8. Miss Harland

In 1790, the opera-house in the Haymarket having been burnt down, Mr. O'Reilly took a lease of the Pantheon at an annual rent of £3,000, and obtained a license from the Lord Chamberlain to call it the King's Theatre. It was opened for Italian Opera in February, 1791, but was totally gutted by fire on 14th January, 1792, nothing but Wyatt's good walls being left standing. The shell was refitted as a theatre and place of general entertainment and reopened in February, 1795. But its old glory had departed. The Royal Princes still frequented it, but the Prince Regent and his brothers were never very fastidious in their pursuit of amusement.

In 1808, when Louis XVIII., the exiled

THE PANTHEON INTERIOR, A.D. 1772.

King of France, visited the Pantheon, it was in the sober light of day, to inspect some curiosity which was on show there. The *haut ton* turned up aristocratic noses at an institution which had sunk to the level of a third-class music hall ; the proprietors became involved in protracted and costly legislation, and the premises had fallen into ruin before July, 1832, when they were sold at auction for £13,000. After extensive alterations and improvements, which brought the building into the general form it now presents, it was reopened as a public bazaar and fine-art gallery, and passed through an uneventful, if harmless, period until it was acquired by Messrs. Gilbey in 1867.

Every part of these spacious premises is now the scene of well-ordered industry. The principal floor is occupied by the counting-house, correspondence department, sample rooms and directors' apartments. On the ground floor is a Printing Office, where from 100 to 200 hands are constantly employed. Here is performed all the printing of the firm, including labels of many shapes and sizes. A sub-department is devoted to bookbinding, which may appear at first sight somewhat foreign to the business of wine merchants ; but the puzzle disappears when it is explained that all the ledgers and other books of the firm,

amounting to many hundreds of volumes a year, are finished on the premises.

There now remains only to give a few notes illustrating the present dimensions of the business started on so modest a scale in 1857 within the little house in Berwick Street.

The sales of wines and spirits amount, on an average, to one million bottles in each month. The duty paid to the British Exchequer averages £500,000 per annum; the regular staff consists of more than 1,200 persons, and there are 3,850 agents in the United Kingdom alone.

Besides the bonded and duty-paid warehouses in London, some of which have been referred to above, the firm has offices and central distributing depôts in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dublin; port wine stores at Villa Nova de Gaia, in Portugal; a bodega at Jerez, in Spain; and stores in Cognac and Burgundy.

The present Board of Directors consists of the following gentlemen:—Sir James Blyth, Bart.; Sir Charles Gold; Messrs. Henry Grinling, Alfred Gilbey, William Crosbie Gilbey, Newman Gilbey, Henry Walter Gilbey, Alfred G. Gold, Arthur N. Gilbey, Gibbons Grinling, Herbert W. Blyth and Arthur W. Blyth.

Sir Walter Gilbey, who retired from active

A REPRESENTATION OF MR. LUNARDI'S BALLOON, AS EXHIBITED IN THE PANTHEON, 1784.

To the Right Honourable FREDERICK EARL OF CARLISLE, Knight of the most Ancient Order of the Thistle, & this Plate is most respectfully dedicated by His Lordship's most devoted and obedient humble Servant,

F. G. BYRON.

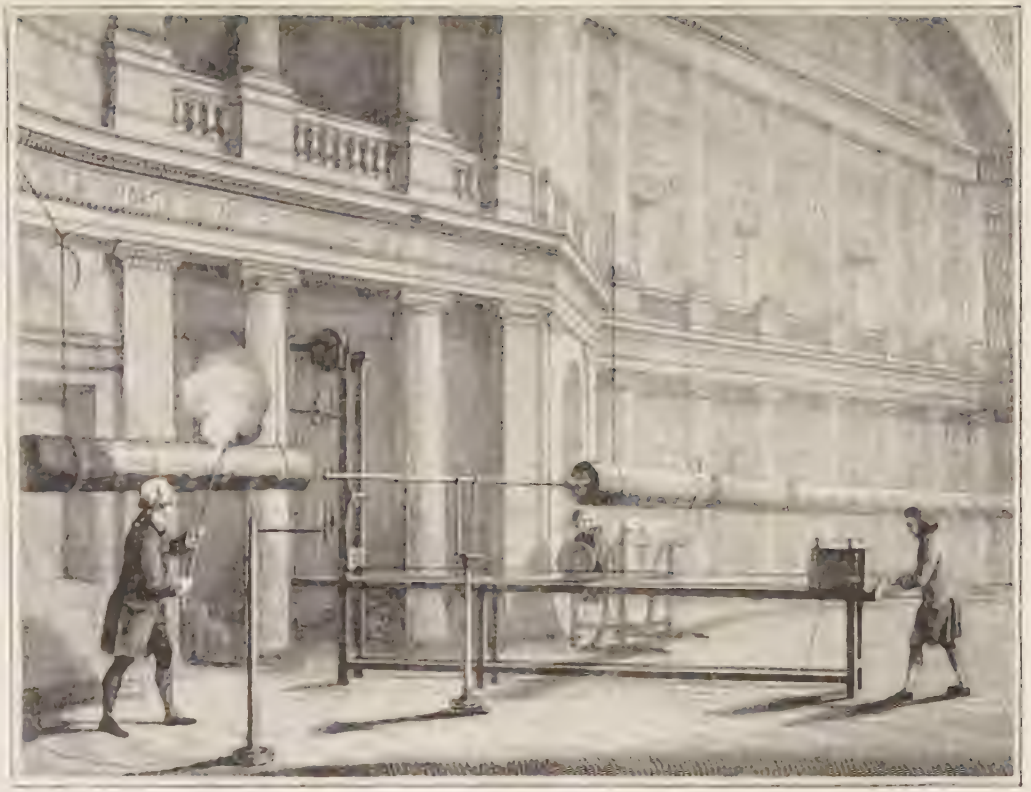
participation in the business in 1905, is the only survivor of the three brothers who founded the firm in 1857, and, being so, it may be permitted to refer to the diverse objects to which he has applied the energy with which he was so abundantly endowed by nature.

Chief among these objects has been the encouragement of agriculture, especially in the direction of the rearing of the best live-stock. The love of horseflesh was latent in the blood of him, derived direct from the old coaching days at Bishop Stortford ; therefore, so soon as Walter Gilbey's strenuous attention to business had put the means within his reach, he applied them to improving the strains of his favourite animal, and, which was of greater moment, enabling his neighbours to do the like. Agricultural draught horses were his first care, and the present high standard of quality exhibited among Shire horses must be traced to the small company which he formed in 1877 for the purchase of two Old English cart stallions. Three years later, having given what appeared at that time the incredible price of 900 guineas for the stallion Spark, he founded his own Shire-horse stud at Elsenham. This coincided with the publication of the first volume of the *Shire Stud Book*, and the result of his example and labours is apparent at this day in the massive, eye-sweet animals which

have replaced the undersized, underfed work-horses, with their ragged quarters and drooping ears, which served English farmers thirty years ago.

From cart-horses the squire of Elsenham extended his attention to other breeds. In 1882, when foreigners were bidding high for the champion Hackney stallion Danegelt, Mr. Gilbey determined that such a prize should not quit our shores. There was no time to lose if the horse was not to be lost, so he sent down to Hull and bought him from his owner, a publican, for 5,000 guineas—a spirited venture which has proved, commercially, to be no bad investment. There are now no fewer than thirteen stallions at Elsenham—namely, three Shire horses, five Hackneys, one Hunter, one Arab, one polo pony sire, a Welsh mountain pony and a Shetland piebald, standing just under nine hands.

Not content with improving the breed of work-horses, Mr. Gilbey desired to see a better average of condition among them, and to him we owe the foundation of the London Cart Horse Society, with its annual parade on Whit-Monday. The list of Sir Walter Gilbey's services to agriculture and horse-breeding are by no means exhausted in this brief summary, but enough has been mentioned to show how well merited were the



A VIEW OF THE APPARATUS AND PART OF THE GREAT CYLINDER IN THE PANTHEON
J. LONG Electrician—*Dec. 1777.*

baronetcy conferred in 1893 in recognition thereof and the further honour of being appointed President of the Royal Agricultural Society in 1896.

In the course of this brief memoir has been traced the rise and unchequered success of the modest enterprise founded in 1857 by Walter and Alfred Gilbey through means of a small loan from their elder brother. The capital invested in the business is now £2,500,000; and the volume of trade may be estimated from the annual sales, which amount to fourteen or fifteen millions of bottles.

Recognition of the character of the business, the principles on which it has been conducted, and, it is fair to assume, the quality of its goods, came from the highest source in the year 1900, when Queen Victoria appointed Sir Walter Gilbey, the chairman of the firm at the time, Purveyor of Wines and Spirits to Her Majesty. At about the same period, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, our present Sovereign, appointed Sir Walter Wine Merchant and Distiller to himself, handing the Royal Warrant personally to Sir Walter as an unusual mark of special favour.

Since His Majesty's accession he has made known his pleasure that his original Warrant,

granted when he was Prince of Wales, should be continued, and have force as constituting Sir Walter Purveyor, as representing the Company. The present Prince of Wales has also granted a fresh Warrant appointing Sir Walter Wine Merchant and Distiller to His Royal Highness. Greater encouragement than this could not be bestowed on any men of business. It may be that knowledge of the leading principles on which they have relied may serve as a beacon to other workers in this competitive world, and throw fresh light upon the sources of that just pride which all Britons may feel in the commercial supremacy of their country.

A GROUP OF W. & A. GILBEY'S VINEDRESSERS AND LABOURERS AT CHÂTEAU LOUDENNE

APPENDIX

To the large number of customers, agents, and connections of the firm that were acquainted with the members who have passed away the following personal notes will perhaps lend additional interest to Sir Herbert Maxwell's work :—

Alfred Gilbey, one of the original founders, died at the age of 46, in November, 1879, some 22 years after the commencement of the business, leaving the firm thoroughly successful and established on a basis indicating continued prosperity. Delicate in health, a strenuous worker, sensitive, keenly intelligent and possessed of a large fund of sound common-sense, Alfred Gilbey was upright in all his doings, and died, as he had lived, respected by all who knew him.

Henry Parry Gilbey, who died in 1892, aged 68, was remarkable, from his youth upward, for an equable temperament that nothing could disturb. Wise and kindly, original in his ideas, simple in his personal

tastes, he was always ready to give counsel and help where needed.

Henry Gold, who died in May, 1900, at the age of 65, was noted for his amiability and good nature. He was one of those invaluable men whose qualities of geniality and courtesy serve to smooth the asperities of life and to assist the machinery of trade to run with the least possible friction.

Henry Arthur Blyth died 4th January, 1901, aged 58. A hard worker from the beginning, business with him took precedence of pleasure. A strict disciplinarian, he set the example himself of punctuality, precision and method, and in private life had many friends.

Arthur Gold (son of Sir Charles Gold) died in 1901, at the comparatively early age of 39, after having served as a Director for only 8 years, leaving behind him none but the most pleasant recollections.

Thanks are due, and are hereby tendered, to the Proprietors of "Ridley's Circular" for their ready consent to the reproduction in this volume of their copyright views of Oporto, Saumur, Bordeaux, Mayence, Reims, Beaune, Jerez de la Frontera, and Tarragona.

F. S. P.

Bronze Statuette presented to W & A GILBEY
by the Agricultural Society of the Gironde for
successful experiments in Vine culture.

GOLD MEDAL awarded by the French Minister of Agriculture to Messrs. W & A GILBEY for Château LOUDENNE as the Best Cultivated Estate in the Claret-growing district of France known as the Médoc.

INDEX

	PAGE
Agency System	16, 32
Agents	16, 74
Amazon River	63
America, North—*See* North America	
America, South—*See* South America	
Appendix	79
Architect—James Wyatt	70
Australasia	63
Baalbec	70
Bailey, James Church	6
Baisse-Voile, Château	49
Balance-Sheet	28
Ballet	72
Basis Wines—*See* Spurious Wines	
Bay of Biscay	48, 51
Bazaar	73
Berwick Street	8, 12, 74
Beychevelle, Château	49
Blended Whisky	60, 61
Blyth, Arthur William	11, 74
Blyth, Henry Arthur	10, 80
Blyth, Herbert William	11, 74
Blyth, James (of Chelmsford)	10
Blyth, Sir James	10, 13, 18, 21, 37, 74
Bodega	74
Bolivia	67
Bonded Stores	59, 67
Bookbinding	73
Bordeaux	47, 48, 51
Bottles	66
Bottle Warehouse	66
Bottle-Washing	65
Brandy	19, 20, 74
Brane-Cantenac, Château	49
Broken glass	66
Budget of 1860, Gladstone's	13, 15
Burgundy, Stores in	74
Business Principles	24
Calon-Ségur, Château	50
Camden Town	63, 64, 65, 66
Campbell, Lady A.	72
Cape Wines	10, 13
Capital of Firm	77
Carpenters	67
Cart Horse Society	76
Cases, Packing	64, 67
Chais	42, 53, 54
Chancellor of the Exchequer	15
Chateaubriand	41
Châteaux, Celebrated	40, 50

PAGE

Chaumont, Château 48
Chenonceaux, Château 48
Churchill, Mr. 72
Claret 41, 43, 45, 46, 55, 56, 57, 59
Classification, Official 49, 55, 56
Coaches 3, 4
Cobden Treaty 13
Cognac 19, 20, 74
Cognac, Stores at 74
Colonial Wines 9
Consumption of Wine 42
Continental Markets 19
Cooperage 54
Corea 67
Cork 20, 21, 22
Cos d'Estournel, Château 50
Cos-Labory, Château 50
Cottages 54
Crimean War 7
Cuvier 42
Darwin, Erasmus—"Loves of the Plants" .. 5
Devonshire, The Duchess of 72
Directors 74
Distilleries 59, 60
Dordogne River 47
Dublin 13, 62, 74
Duncannon, Lady 72
Duty on Wines 9, 13
Duty-Paid Warehouse 64, 65, 66
Duty Payments 74
Edinburgh 4, 74
Engineering Department 66
Engine Shed 67, 68
Export 59, 67, 68
Fire destroyed first Pantheon 72
Foundation of Firm 3, 8
French Ambassador 69
French Treaty 13
Gallipoli 7
Garonne River 47
Gascony 48
Gathering Grapes 51
George IV. 4, 71, 72
Gilbey, Alfred (one of the Founders) .. 7, 18, 33, 79
Gilbey, Alfred (son of Alfred Gilbey, Founder) .. 11, 74
Gilbey, Arthur Nockolds 11, 74
Gilbey, Henry, Coach Proprietor 4, 5
Gilbey, Henry Parry 6, 17, 79
Gilbey, Henry Walter 11, 74
Gilbey, Newman 11, 74
Gilbey, Sir Walter 7, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78
Gilbey, William Crosbie 11, 74

PAGE

Gin Distillery 63
Gironde River 47, 48
Gladstone, The Right Hon. W. E. .. 13, 31, 32
Gladstone Claret 14
Glasgow 74
Glass Broken 66
Glen-Spey Distillery 61
Gold, Alfred G. 11, 74
Gold, Arthur 80
Gold, Sir Charles 11, 13, 21, 37
Gold, Henry 11, 13, 80
Gold Medal 44
Gonzalez, Don Manuel M. 39
Graham, The Marquis of 72
Grand Monarque 55
Great Titchfield Street 12
Grinling, Gibbons 11, 74
Grinling, Henry 7, 11, 74
Gruaud-Larose, Château 50
Guienne 48
Guisnes, Monsieur de 70
Harland, Miss 72
Haut-Brion, Château 49, 54, 59
Haymarket Opera House 72
Herbert, Lord 72
Horses 52, 75, 76
House of Lords Committee 16
Hundred Years' War 48
Ingram, Miss 72
Irish Branch 12, 13
Irish Whiskey 62
Jameson, John, & Son 62
Java, Island of 67
Jerez de la Frontera 39
Jersey, Lady 72
King's Theatre 72
Kirwan, Château 49
Knockando Distillery 61
Lafite, Château 49, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59
La Maréchale 47
Landes, The 51
Langoa, Château 54
Larose, Château 56
Latour, Château 49, 56
Léoville, The Châteaux 50, 56
Levi, Comte de 69
Lewisham, Lord 72
Limited Liability Act 27
Loire River 48
London and North Western Railway .. 63, 66, 67, 68
Lord High Admiral 49
Lord Mayor, Christopher Smith 6

PAGE

Loudenne .. 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54
Louis XVIII. 72
"Loves of the Plants," Erasmus Darwin's 5
McAdam, J. L., Road Maker 3
Magellan, Straits of 63
Manaos 63
Manuring Vine-land 54
Marcellus, Vicomtesse de 41
Margaux, Château 49, 56, 57
Margaux, Commune of 49, 56
Médoc, The 48
Montrose, Château 50, 54, 55
"Morning Herald" 71
"Morning Post" 71
Mouton Rothschild, Château 49
Napoleon I. 55
Netley Hospital 7
Newchwang 67
Newmarket 4
North America 63
Nugent, Lady L. 72
"Off" Licences 15, 16
Oxen 52
Oxford Street, No. 357—Office 12
Opera House, Haymarket 72
O'Reilly 72
Palmer, Château 49
Pantheon 23, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73
Pantheon, Roman 70
Parkes, Dr. E. A. 7
Pauillac 49, 50
Payment by Results 25
Phipps, Colonel 72
Phylloxera Vastatrix 19, 42, 44, 45, 46
Pichon-Longueville, Château 50, 56
Pitt, William 15
Pitt, Honorable Mr. G. 72
Plantagenet Kings 48
Ploughing Vines 54
Poland Street 70
Pontet-Canet, Château 50, 54
Port Wine, Large sale of 20
Port Wine Stores 71
Prejudice 30, 33
Press Cuttings 69
Prince of Wales (George IV.) 4, 71, 72
Prince Regent 4, 71, 72
Princess's Theatre Cellars 12
Printing Office 73
Production of Château Loudenne Vineyards .. 43, 53
Pruning Vines 54
Railways, Introduction of 3, 5

PAGE

Ranelagh 69
Raphael's *Loggias* 70
Rebuilding the Pantheon 70, 73
Regency 69
Regent, Prince—*See* Prince Regent
Replanting Vines 54
Reports on Continental Travel 21, 36, 37
Ridley's Circular 80
Rothschild, Messrs. 49
Round House—*See* Engine Shed
Royal Agricultural Society 77
Royal Commission on Licensing Laws 16
Royal Warrants 77, 78
Saint-Estèphe 50, 56
Saint-Julien 49, 56
St. Leger, Major 72
Saint-Yzans 50
Salisbury, Lady 72
San Francisco 63
Saumur 33, 34
Scotland 13
Second Generation, The 11
Scotch Whisky 60, 61
Secret Commissions 25, 34
Shire Stud Book 75
Smith, Christopher, M.P., Lord Mayor .. 6
Smith, Woodhouse & Co. 6
Smoking 59
South America 63, 67
Southard, Gilbey & Co. 6, 8
Spraying Vines 54
Spurious Wines 58
Staff 74
Stock-taking 25, 28, 29
Strathmill Distillery 61
Tarragona 37, 38
Timber 67
"Times" Annual Letter 35
Trade Secrets 35
Treading Grapes 53
Varro, Marcus Terentius 52
Vatican 70
Victoria, Queen 77
Villa Nova de Gaia 74
Vintages, Dates of Claret 46
Wales, Prince of 4, 71, 72, 77
Walpole, Horace 69
Wells Street 12
Whisky 60, 61
Wine and Spirit News 56
Woodhouse (Smith, Woodhouse & Co.) 6
Wyatt, James, Architect 70, 72